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sounding off live

**News items
should reach us by
Friday 12 November
for inclusion in the
December/January
issue**

**Sounding Off
is compiled by
Rob Young**

■ György Ligeti, the Hungarian composer now in his 70th year, is artist-in-residence at The Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival between 17 and 28 November. Venues all over the town will feature some of the most innovative musics of the century. Ligeti, Andriessen and Görecki will be in attendance for talks and film screenings, and performers include The Kronos and Arditti Quartets, Piano Circus, New York's Bang On A Can All-Stars and FredERIC Rzewski. There's also a minimalist marathon — a six-hour jamboree of over thirty minimalist pieces culminating in an audience hands-on rendition of Terry Riley's *In C*. For a full brochure with details of dates, times, venues and prices contact the Festival Box Office at Tourist Information Centre, Albion Street, Huddersfield HD1 2NW, or telephone 0484 430808. Now flip to page 22 to win a no-expense-spared weekend in Huddersfield to see The Kronos Quartet. And more!

■ Two types of African music reach the UK this month. Salif Keita brings his Ivory Coast and Cameroonian posse to The Grand in South London (4, 081 677 8466) and Bristol New Trinity Arts Centre (5, 0272 550659). Alternatively, let Moroccan Gnawa musicians exorcise your evil spirits. They're taking their percussion-based trance music on tour at Jackson's Lane Community Centre (13), SOAS Russell Square (17) and The Paradise, Kilburn Lane (24), all in London, as well as Brighton Concorde (23), and Loddswell in South Devon (26). Further Gnawa info from Jane Loveless (081 960 8523).

■ Stromboli, upcoming improv quartet and self-styled "Sigmund Freud of sound", take their acoustic jazz/classical/folk/funk/minimalist/salsa eclecticism out on the road this month, courtesy of the Arts Council. Count the genres being cross-pollinated at London's Tenor Clef (10) and International Student House (25), as well as Southampton (18), Leeds Terrence Festival (26), Manchester (27) and Sheffield (28). Full analysis on 081 889 0499.

■ Two short(ish) tours for two of the UK's finest. Pinks Zoo, the relentlessly (and undeservedly) obscure punk-harmolodic quartet, who are currently in the studio recording new material, begin touring at the end of November, with dates at Nottingham Filly And Firkin (26) and Brighton Concorde

(29) with more to follow in December (details in next month's issue), while Evidence, the explosive jazz collective led by keyboardist Roland Perrin, play Manchester Band On The Wall (4), London Vortex (12) and Exeter Arts Centre (13). Details from 071 829 8352.



■ Some of India's finest classical musicians will provide "a simple journey into inner space" this month. Ustad Bismillah Khan, maestro of the shenai, brings an eight piece band to London's Queen Elizabeth Hall (22, tickets £13.50-£35). Ustad Vilayat Khan is a highly individual sitar master, basing his phrasing and ornamentation on the sound of the human voice. His only UK appearance is at London's Royal Festival Hall (25, £8-£35). Box Office for both is 071 928 8800. South Indian violinist Laligudi G Jayaraman visits three London venues with his show *Time Scales*, based on early evening and night

ragas. Get into the mystic at The Bhavan Centre, Kensington (21, £9-£5), The Purcell Room (26, £9/£7) and Stanley Halls, South Norwood (27, £5/£4). Information on 081 470 4393.

■ The 37th London Film Festival premieres several music related features this month, including Kate Bush's directorial debut, *The Line, The Cross, The Curve* is an Orphée-like dance fantasy starring swoonsome Kate with Miranda Richardson, Lindsay Kemp and dancer Stewart Arnold. The 55-minute film features songs from her new album *The Red Shoes* and is screened at the Odeon West End (13). Other Festival attractions include *Theatre: The 121/13*, Odeon WE), David Byrne's stark new concert movie, *Fear Of A Black Hat*, a kind of HipHop Spinal Tap (13, Odeon WE/20, Electric), *Cachao - Like His Rhythm There Is No Other* (20, NFI), a documentary about the legendary Cuban danzón musician, and *Twist* (5, NFI), a lighthearted bunch of archive footage and reminiscences by the people who actually lived in the Land Of A Thousand Dances. Festival info on 071 928 2695.

■ US avant rockers Band Of Susans (see feature page 18), appear at North London's Garage (3) supported by Tar, and South London's Venue (5), with unlaikn-hidden rockers Grotus. More out-of-town dates to be confirmed.

■ Messiaen the mystic, Messiaen the passionate, Messiaen the naturalist. Sorry, naturalist. The Barican's short season celebrating the birdwatching composer falls across November, with conductor Kent Nagano and the LSO giving the UK premiere of *Colors Sur L'Au-Delà* (21), an apocalyptic but rarely-performed work inspired by the *Book Of Revelation*. The following week Jeanne Lonod and Paul Crossley are soloists in *Oiseau Exotique, Couleurs De La Cité Celeste* and *Trois Petites Liturgies De La Présence Divine*, accompanied by the London Sinfonietta (29). In an exclusive offer to *Wire* readers, the LSO are





Olivier and Kent

offering up to 25% reductions on tickets for these concerts and Des Canyons *Aux Etoiles* — on 10 December. Just call the Box Office on 071 638 BB91 quoting *The Wire Reader Offer*.

■ London's South Bank opens its doors to some big names in jazz this month. The Queen Elizabeth Hall has Edward Vesala's Sound And Fury (4, see feature page 24), Andy Sheppard's new band Big Co-Motion (14), percussionist Trick Gurtu (18) and the Stan Tracey Octet (30). Listen through the walls and you might catch some of the lineup at the Royal Festival Hall next door: the sole UK appearance of Ornette Coleman's Acoustic Quartet (5) comprising Don Cherry, Charnett Moffett and son Denardo on drums, or John McLaughlin's electric trio Free Spirits (9). In addition, all acts apart from Ornette are on tour around the country, check local press for details. South Bank Box Office: 071 928 BB00.

■ Steve Wishart, the versatile violin/hurdy-gurdyist with one foot in 13th century *cançons* and another in modern ethereal sample-scapes, unveils her latest project WISH on 10 November at London's Conway Hall. Accompanied by Oorthea Schiarch (vocals), Jim Dentley (wind instruments, frame drums) and Julian Knowles (synths, samples), she'll be premiering the newly-commissioned *Lacunae* as well as airing material from her album (also called *Wish*). Support comes from Chris Burn's Ensemble, kick-off is at 7.30, tickets £5/£4, hear all about it on 081 546 2979.

■ Pool are Olive Bell (shakuhachi, etc.), Wireman Richard Scott (sax), Matthew Armstrong (bass) and David Ross (drums). They're lighting

the blue touch paper to their November Fireworks Tour in Lancaster (5), then Manchester (6), where they play St Aidan's Hall in the early evening before dashing across town to hit the Night And Day Jazz Café for a late night session. More dates tbc. ring 061 448 9173 for more information.

■ John Tavener, the award-winning composer of *The Protecting Veil*, will give a lecture, *Towards A Sacred Art*, on 13 at London's Victoria and Albert Museum. The talk, on works influenced by the Orthodox Church, will be illustrated with musical extracts and complements the Museum's current exhibition of Russian sacred painting. Tickets are £5/£2.50, and proceedings start at 3.30 pm in the Lecture Theatre. The BBC Symphony Orchestra have just announced a major Tavener Festival for January 1994: full details in the next issue.

■ Soaraway success composer Gorecki naturally features heavily in Radio Three's Polish Season. The BBC Philharmonic perform *Requiem*, *Concerto Cantata* and *Beatus Vir* at the Royal Festival Hall (22), and Matthias Bamert conducts the BBCSO in the *First Symphony* ("1959") along with the Szymanowski *Second Violin Concerto* at Queen Elizabeth Hall (28). All concerts are broadcast on Radio Three. Box Office: 071 928 BB00. To win FREE tickets for these and the Gorecki *Third* on 2 December, turn to page 22.

■ Notes from the Polish jazz underground will also be cracking over the airwaves on Radio Three's frequency this month. Brian Morton presents *Time And Silence* (broadcast on 22 and 29 at 4.30 pm, and repeated on the following

an editor's idea

Paper lasts, and so do the marks on it — that's how history gets to be a study. Vinyl lasts, as well, and chrome dioxide magnetic tape, up to a point, and even, they say, the shiny stuff that CDs are made of.

People, on the other hand, don't last. So should music? The central tension in 20th century music falls between the idea of music made to last, and music made for the here and now (whenever that happened to have been). Because since round about 1877, music that wasn't especially meant to last has been, by being cut into grooves (or stored as pulse) and played and replayed and played again.

The thing about composition, Glenn Branca told *The Wire* a few years back, is that you can capture a little bit of magic in a jar. The thing about recording is that — if you're lucky — a machine does the catching for you, and you never even have to know how to repeat it. You can go on to do something else: once is enough.

Music made with an eye to history is music that knows it's going to be studied, closely, that knows scholars will be reading between the lines for the rest of time. Music made for the here and now is free to be unafraid, unworried about being second-guessed by some sneery commentator in 20 years time. Some improvisors calmly argue that the best music is music that hardly anyone ever heard, and that those that did have more or less entirely forgotten exactly how it went (though not the fact that they heard it). They point out that when you play back the bootleg tape you made of that great show a year ago, it sounds completely different, and you suddenly aren't quite sure why you kept it at all. They argue that all that can be kept — caught in that jar — is the trivial detritus. The stuff that only sounds like music.

By contrast, the century is littered with people who listened to the records of their own youth too often, too obsessively, who, trapped by their own subjectivity, can hear nothing but decline in what follows. Trad jazzers are not so very different from Smiths fans in this regard. Small wonder that people who construct records — pop musicians — have their eyes on the future as much as anyone else (even if the horizon of this week's thing looms larger), and angle their pitch for the future in terms of things that have reached to them out of their own past. Such people would like us to be a tip-sheet, to advise in advance what of today is going to matter tomorrow.

The interesting thing, when we're not just reading tea leaves, is the present, all the same. Music is a way of responding to the world around us, of resisting it, or running from it (or obscuring it, or transforming it). **MARK SINKER**

sounding off

Thursdays at 10.15 pm), a historical survey of the neglected Polish jazz and improv scene. Brian will also discuss aspects of Polish jazz in *Impressions* (20, 11 pm). And an unknown quantity of combos straight outta Poland can be heard live (27, 10.30 pm).

■ **Fine Tuning** is the blanket title of a package of live music put together by James Wood and his Ensemble Of The Centre For Microtonal Music. He describes microtones as "the notes between the notes" — the untranscribed intervals found in traditional musics in Africa, Japan and the Middle East, as well as jazz and blues in league with The New London Chamber Choir, the programme consists of works by Kevin Volans, Giacomo Scelsi, Jonathan Harvey, Iannis Xenakis and Wood himself, the tour takes in London QEH (15, 071 928 8800), Bath (17, 0225 826431), Oxford (19, 0865 792792), Leicester (20, 0533 554854) and Huddersfield Festival (21, 0484 430808). Prices vary from venue to venue.

■ **Steve Martland** wheels out a new piece for premiere around the land this month, *Dance Works*, commissioned by London Contemporary Dance Theatre for Shoes choreographed by Aletta Collins, can be heard in its ensemble version (nine instruments including three saxes, electronic guitar and bass) at Blackpool Grand Theatre (3-6), Woking New Victoria Theatre (9/10), and London Sadler's Wells (23-27, 30). Details from individual venues.

■ **Jazz Umbrella** provides a shelter for anyone involved in jazz, and is dedicated to raising the music's profile by arranging affordable gigs, commissioning new works and

creating jazz education workshops. They've set up November happenings at London's Vortex (£3/£2, D71 254 6516) including touring grooves from The Adam Glasser Quartet (11), pianist Mick Pym's Trio (18) playing Bill Evans and Herbie Hancock tunes as well as originals, and ex-Oscar Peterson drummer Martin Drew's Quartet (25). Other JIU events this month take place at London's The Eagle



(£3/£2, D81 555 5239/2463), where you'll find Aqua Manna, the four-piece led by sparkling Brazilian percussionist Bosco D'Oliveira (2), saxophonist Pete King with the Simon Purcell Trio (16), and tenorist Leigh Etherington (23). Jazz Umbrella are planning to open more venues, issue a CD featuring their members' work and generally make as big a noise as possible, and can be contacted on D81 555 5239 (Simon Purcell) or D81 519 1398 (Annie Whitehead).

■ **Who needs to travel** when The Waterman's Arts Centre in Brentford (D81 568 1176) can bring the world to you? Lafayette-born blues accordion/guitarist Joe Walker flies in with promises of an exuberant stage performance (5),

while Kenyan benga-beat seven-piece Mandingo air their infectious pop (6). Seminal jazz funk vibesman Roy Ayers tells it like it is on the 12, followed two days later by Xacara, eight performer-composers who use sixty different instruments gathered around the world and sound them together in revealing new combinations (14). There's also Parampara (21). Indian classical vocal/percussion with the Pandit Ram Sahib Sangeet Vidhalya, Kuljit Bhamra Mestura's bhanga-rance fusion (26) and the reggae 'n' mento of Jazz Jamaica featuring Ernest Ranglin (27). Phone for ticket prices.

■ **This month's roster** at The Vortex's Sunday night Jazz Rumours (D71 254 6516) includes The Elton Dean/Howard Riley Quartet (7), Paul Dunnall, Elton Dean, Barry Guy and Tony Levin (14), Alex Kokolsky, Alan Tomlinson and Marco Mattos (21) and Full Monte comprising Chris Biscoe, Brian Godding, Marco Mattos and Tony Marsh (28). £4/£3 will get you through the doors.

■ **The North London Jazz Café's** November bid to seduce you out of your armchair is spearheaded by the power assault of ex-Cream and PIL drummer Ginger Baker with Jonas Hellborg (1). Following up are Jimmy Cliff & Hank Crawford (3), Carleen Anderson and guest Bobby Byrd (7/8), The Jason Rebello Trio (9), Shawn Colvin (10) and Herbie Mann (14). There's eclectic jazz action from Steps Ahead (15/16) and a London Jazz 80s club night (25), including Reuben Wilson, Outside and Push and DJ slots from Russ Dewbury and Giles Peterson. The Box Office number is D71 916 6060.

■ **And in case this errs too much** on the slack side, here's something to muddy the waters. Skree are a sax-led quartet described as Morricone meets Napalm Death. If you don't believe them see for yourself: they're playing at Camden Falcon (9) and Chalk Farm Pionarch (23) (both in North London, yet again). Details on 071 383 0499.

■ **Two festivals you should know** about. Nottingham's *Now 93* begins with a blast on 5 November, lasts a month and gives platforms to all manner of installations, dance/performance artists and film/video makers. To Corriero is a retrospective examination of the links between video and live music, with examples drawn from the most innovative figures in this field (eg David Byrne, Michael Nyman, Sonic Youth). Best phone 0602 419419 for a full programme. Meanwhile The Wirral International Guitar Festival will flood Merseyside with pluckers, strummers and general axe-wielders between 7 and 22 November. It's a series of concerts, workshops, masterclasses, lectures and demonstrations by over fifty international artists — Bert Jansch, Juan Martin, John Renbourn, Isaac Guilroy, Martin Taylor and Richard Thompson to name but six. Contact Rob Smith or Phil Holiday at the Department Of Leisure Services in Wirral on 051 647 2366.

■ **Two typically esoteric events** from the London Musicians Collective take place this month on, er, Platform Nine of Clapham Junction BR station in South London. Both events feature a duo of international vocal improvisors (in tandem with nasal tannoy announcers and the 3.15 to Brighton, no doubt). David Moss (USA) and Tenko (Japan) (14), and Sankho Namchylak (Tulsa) and Phil Minton (UK) (28). Both events begin at 2.30 pm. Further info on timetables, cancellations, etc, from D71 490 2118.



letter from romania

Just when *The Wire* inaugurated its praiseworthy "Letter From..." column, Romania's contemporary (including jazz) music scene took a thriving turn (as if in defiance of the country's precarious economic situation inherited after half a century of totalitarian regimes).

Already at the beginning of 1993, Cluj-Napoca — a town situated in the strikingly beautiful setting of Transylvania — bestowed the "Citizen Of Honour" title upon Iannis Xenakis. This living legend of contemporary music was actually born of a Greek family in the cosmopolitan Danube port of Braila 71 years ago. Xenakis was so impressed with the festivities that accompanied the award, comprising a doctor *honoris causa* ceremony at the Cluj Academy Of Music and an entire Xenakis concert attended by a 1000-plus audience at the local Philharmonic, that he resorted to Romanian in order to express his gratitude (a language he had not spoken in public since 1938).

Soon afterwards, the same city hosted concerts given by two former conductors of France's Orchestre Nationale De Jazz: guitarist Claude Barthélemy (currently preparing an opera about the Marquis De Sade) and pianist Antoine Hervé. The latter appeared in tandem with Bulgarian-born Turkish singer Yildiz Ibrahimova.

Spring brought along a series of memorable jazz events. The biggest surprise was the three-day Camel Jazz Alive Summit. Spectators from all over the country descended on Bucharest, attracted by the first transoceanic package of jazzmen to appear here in two decades: Chick Corea, soloing on the grand piano with a rather introverted disposition; 60s free jazz survivors Barry Altschul and Sam Rivers with their younger, equally passionate accomplices Uri Caine on piano and Santu Di Briano on bass, Artito Moreira's Fourth World featuring Flora Purim, Gary Meek and José Neto in yet another transfiguration of Brazil's rhythmic, melodic and poetic resources; and James Blood Ulmer's savage blues visions. The list of guests was completed by three gifted young musicians from the North: Scottish tenorman Tommy Smith, Norwegian bassist Terje Gewelt and Canadian drummer Jan Froman.

The exorbitant ticket prices couldn't stop a crowd of over 3500 attending each of the festival's three gala events held at the Sala Palatului, an enormous hall where, not long ago, the country's ruling party's congresses were being so arrogantly celebrated. Romania's

jazz musicians also left a good impression, and it's a pity they get so few chances to be better-known abroad. Such names as Johnny Raducanu, Harry Tavitian, Dan Ionescu, Marius Popp, Mircea Tiberian, Corneliu Stroe, Garbis Dedeian, Laurentiu Butoi, Catalin Rotaru, Christian Solesanu, Mihai Porcisanu, Anca Parghel, Tudor Zaharescu, Lucian Pais, Romeo Cosma, Stefan Vannai, and Ion Leonte cover a wide stylistic ground. They lack neither professionalism nor talent. But then, clinging onto the chimera of art in a country where both the father of Dadaism (Tristan Tzara) and the creator of absurd theatre (Eugene Ionesco) were born can result in some pretty kamikaze-like biographies.

Most of Romania's jazz people gathered again at two traditional events that take place every other year: the 23rd International Jazz Festival in Sibiu and the 13th Brasov Jazz Festival. Highlight: ex-Miles sax-player Bill Evans, playing in a completely acoustic setting, with a supercharged energy engendered by his interplay with the



Calderazzo brothers (Joey on piano, Gene on drums) and Walter Schmocker on bass. These events also provided good opportunities for freewheeling veteran Burton Greene to rediscover his Moldavian roots (he confessed that an ancestral aunt of his, a violinist, entertained the Romanian royal court a century ago). Greene teamed up with reedsman Laurentiu Butoi's group to honour Monk, freedom of spirit and Romanian folklore. Almost the same goes for pianist Harry Tavitian and drummer Corneliu Stroe's experiments in creating an original Romanian jazz sound. No concessions to fashion or fadism, but strong effects on the listeners. Romania's young jazz public seems to be a treasure in itself.

They are a moral compensation for times of such material dearth. The national TV station, *Televiziunea Romana*, recorded both events, and presented them at large to a potential twenty million viewers. And MC Florian Lungu managed to be present everywhere.

The third edition of the New Music Week in Bucharest was not only a showcase for Romania's powerful contemporary music school, but also an international treat with guests. Appearing were Poland's Wilanow String Quartet, Jorge Peixinho's Lisbon Ensemble. Of Contemporary Music, Catalunya's BCN Percussion, British trombonist Barry Webb, France's Emphasis saxophone quartet, Italy's Chromas Ensemble, Japanese flautist Yoko Owada, Slovenia's Veri Ensemble and many more. **VIRGIL MIHAIU**

100% ALIVE

Pick up someone else's litter

Send your mum some flowers

Strip right down to your underwear

Go for a run around the block

Tune your radio to Kiss and pull the knob off

Believe in yourself

Eat a pineapple

Write the alphabet backwards

Order an empty skip

Meet an old friend you haven't seen for years

Make a record

Dance the dance electric

Plant a tree

Learn a second language

Every day at the same time stop and think about something wonderful

Go and see Ryan Giggs

Get your nipple pierced

Give £100 to a down and out

Put your change into a bottle for a year and give it to charity

Make a statement

Visit Great Ormond Street Hospital

Begin something you've always wanted to begin

Go to the market and spend 10p

Help someone today

Throw away your watch

Laugh

Wear a wig

Make everyone at work a cup of tea

Take a picture of your back

Go for a day without speaking

Write to Mother Teresa

Turn your radio up full blast

Teach a child to read

Buy a book on Jeff Koons

Stare at the clouds for a full ten minutes

Buy Marvin Gaye's 'What's going on'

Tell someone a secret

Visit Great Ormond Street Hospital

Begin something you've always wanted to begin

Go to the market and spend 10p

Help someone today

Throw away your watch

Laugh

Wear a wig

Make everyone at work a cup of tea

Take a picture of your back

Go on holiday and don't take any luggage

Wallpaper the inside of your car

Go on holiday and don't take any luggage

**TUNE TO 100FM,
CLOSE YOUR EYES,
STICK A PIN IN THIS
PAGE AND DO IT.**



- 1 Take a bath in milk
- 2 Climb a tree
- 3 Watch 'It's a wonderful life'
- 4 Get on a bus you never got on before
- 5 Drink a glass of water
- 6 Clean your ears
- 7 Dream for the day
- 8 Visit New York
- 9 Listen to Jazzy B's next show
- 10 Get up an hour earlier tomorrow
- 11 Do 100 press-ups
- 12 Eat something you've never tried before
- 13 Ride a Merry-go-round
- 14 Say hello to a policeman
- 15 Spend an hour in a place of worship
- 16 Send someone a telegram
- 17 Put your sofa in the kitchen
- 18 Go to a museum
- 19 Write a Fairy-tale
- 20 Help a stranger with their shopping
- 21 Sing a song at the top of your voice
- 22 Learn to listen more
- 23 Go home a different way every night for a week
- 24 Make a wish
- 25 Write to your MP
- 26 Put on a dress
- 27 Stop saying no for a whole week
- 28 Take your granny to the movies
- 29 Paint your toe-nails
- 30 Carry a flower all day
- 31 Feed someone else's meter
- 32 Write a poem
- 33 Visit an art gallery
- 34 Feed the birds
- 35 Shave your head
- 36 Dance in the front garden
- 37 Get on a bus you've never been on before
- 38 Do a jigsaw puzzle
- 39 Get your hair cut
- 40 Dance in the rain
- 41 Fast for a day
- 42 Buy a hat
- 43 Use a fountain pen
- 44 Walk home today
- 45 Feed the dog
- 46 Invite your neighbour to tea
- 47 Give your favourite possession away
- 48 Memorise a Woody Allen joke
- 49 Tell the truth for a day
- 50 Scream
- 51 Put the kettle on
- 52 Take up knitting
- 53 Listen to Rodigan's next show, in the park
- 54 Spend an afternoon speculating on how to make a million
- 55 Forgive someone
- 56 Do one thing to make the world a better place to live
- 57 Learn a new word every day
- 58 Only boil as much water as you need
- 59 Photocopy this ad and get someone else to do it
- 60 Tune into Caesar tomorrow morning at 4am
- 61 Buy a friend your favourite book
- 62 Tell someone you appreciate what they do
- 63 Buy your boss a present
- 64 Kiss
- 65 Buy the next record you hear on Kiss
- 66 Wink at someone ugly
- 67 Talk about God with a friend
- 68 Make a million pounds
- 69 Walk on the grass
- 70 Tell someone your dreams
- 71 Do a cartwheel
- 72 Learn to fly
- 73 Stop someone getting AIDS
- 74 Put your name on a star
- 75 Say yes for a day

an A of

Q is for **aleatory music**

Composing tunes by throwing dice (alea: Latin for dice) must seem like the ultimate dalt art move. In the 50s, when the crowd-pulling things in music were Broadway-style melody and harmony, composing by chance operation was a way of saying, hey, the tune [the organisation of the notes] isn't important anyway! It's the texture that counts: randomise the notes and everyone will dig the texture. Now pop's fashioned in studios, and the masses have found a way to love texture, and they still ignore High Culture composition.

b is for **biomusic**

ie birdsong, humbacked whale song, amplified alpha-waves from the human brain. All these, but also music where small live beasts are the notation. For example, Yehuda Yannay's *Bugnotes*, starting "one beetle, one centipede, and five or six ants. These insects were in a real sense the 'composers' and conductors, even if Yannay did set up the parameters. The bugs [were] running around in a plastic box set on the projector. Different areas of the 'playing field' represented varieties of loud and soft. Green yellow and blue gels represented high and low pitches. The ants did most of the running, even one [that] was named." (from David Cope's *New Directions in Music*)

C is for **musique concrète**

Pierre Schaeffer, a radio engineer who couldn't read music, and Pierre Hennin, who could (which didn't stop him in later days from making a terrible record with rock band Spooky Tooth) were the pioneers, in Paris in the late 40s, of music made by collage, of records and, later, tapes (found sound) looped and layered. Compared to Industrial Techno today, what survives sounds feeble, but for a while, Paris was the place to be. Boulez and Stockhausen both made a pilgrimage, the ever-ambitious Frenchman later stalking out to complain the studio's equipment reminded him of a "flea market".

d is for **darmstadt**

The town in West Germany where the International Summer Courses in New Music are held every year. By the late 50s, it was the humming centre of every kind of wild idea in music, with Stockhausen pretty much heading the pack. Boulez, Béro, Henze, Maderna and Nono all attended, first as pupils, then as teachers.

e is for **experimental music**

John Cage took as his zen example the image of a bald Buddhist monk whacking his pupil on the back of the head with a stick to get him thinking straight. Many of Cage's pieces have a similar function (except listening rather than thinking is the end). Cage's pupils — who include Morton Feldman, Earle Brown, Christian Wolff, Yoko Ono and Nam June Paik, in increasing order of naughtiness — got hooked on the whack of the stick, and spent a decade or two devising better ways for audiences to see sense, or nonsense, or stars.

f is for **the futurists**

On the eve of the first World War, led by the arch self-publicist TF Marinetti, the Futurists embraced the Future — 20th century technology, they loved it all, from the lightbulb to the bomb! They wanted to dispense with the whole of the art of the past, and start over. Their music theorist, Luigi Russolo, worked quietly away on the construction of noise-machines: creakers, groaners, grinders, roarsers, and snappers — long after even the forward-looking Edgard Varèse had lost patience. Until one day in the late 30s, when he simply stopped, and handed over his whole collection to a Paris museum, where it was destroyed in an air-raid during WW2.

g is for **graphic scores**

At some point in the late 20s, it became clear that music was soon going to be full of noises that notation hadn't a hope of representing. At first people tried new, bigger, better notations, with symbols for everything anyone could think of [play with back of

bow, whack violin bridge with spoon, whack violin player with spoon, dress in rubber and run around shouting]. But no one used any of them more than once. John Cage, meanwhile, started writing scores (*Fontana Mix*, for example) with symbols for "more or less do what you want". The glorious moment came when the young Cornelius Cardew's *Treatise* was unveiled, a work which was really just a nice picture "inspired by" classical notation. This hasn't stopped AMM "performing" it every now and then.

h is for **history**

Ever since Richard Wagner wrote about the music of the future (meaning his own) most composers have worried whether or not they're going to get a mention when history finally gets written. Since the idea that history has a direction is not that fashionable these days (while the idea that it can be scientifically predicted in advance seems positively crinkly), all the composer-bottins that hedged their bets by pretending their music was really a kind of maths homework are left looking even more nerdy than they intended. Still, the subsequent composers that turned against this line can't help but seem as if they combine scientific literacy with money-mindedness. When history gets written, the first may not be something they mind about, but the second will look greedy as well as silly, unless you're earning in Madonna-proportions.

i is for **IRCAM**

The underground sound-research lab (Institut de Recherche et de Coordination Acoustique/Musique) beneath the Pompidou Centre in Paris, was opened by Pierre Boulez in 1977 (his own flea-market at last!). The point was to find all the new sound electronics and computers ought to be able to make. George Lewis — he of the improvising computer — worked there for a while. He noted that, at IRCAM parties, whenever he put on James Brown records all the vanguardist bigwigs quickly left the

room. Today the feeling is that the big bad world has left IRCAM far behind. Certainly since its opening — since which date digital technology has invaded every corner of music — hardly a peep has been heard from IRCAM.

j is for **jesus' blood never failed me yet (by gavin bryans)**

You don't need dice and you don't need paper — you just need a tramp and a tape recorder, and hey presto! you're a composer.

k is for **klangfarbenmelodie**

Schoenberg's term — it means a 'melody' of timbre rather than notes — is a proof that this century's central secret project has been to satisfy the craving for new kinds of sound that radio and records stimulate, which notes on paper simply can't capture. 12-toners and dodecans wanted new sound, as did electroacousticians and the late-fatherers in the Authentic Instruments movement (whose versions of Mozart sound, played on non-anachronistic fiddles, as if they'd been rewritten by Russolo).

l is for **lady macbeth of the mtsensk district**

This is the opera that goaded the Stalinists into denouncing Dmitri Shostakovich for "formalism", after which he composed his ever-popular *Fifth Symphony*, the "Soviet composer's reply to just criticism". Of course the irony today, with so

The Wire's speedy guide to whatever it is composers still think they're for...

Z

much Eastern European and Russian music being marketed on the back of a sometimes questionable dissident status, is that the West's unrepentant formalists are being turned into dissidents

m is for **minimalism**
Such a triumphant commercial success that opponents and backers alike have conveniently forgotten its roots in experimental 60s bolshiness and dippy prankster vanguardism. Minimalism — as practiced by Philip Glass and John Adams — soothes, with simple harmonies endlessly repeated. Steve Reich has escaped back to tape-loop multi-media work, while Terry Riley and La Monte Young gaze East and chant mantras

n is for **new complexity**
Usually treated as a reaction to the above reaction (see Minimalism), if not the antidote, New Complexity is really a bunch of grouchy old dinosaurs committed to cramming as much musical material into as little space as possible, and not caring if anyone who doesn't read music ever finds out about it. Like all rare (and vanishing?) skills it can be gripping or rebatably dreary

o is for **ondes martenot**
The only 'new' instrument to make it onto the orchestral top table (and only then because composer Olivier Messiaen married OM virtuoso Yvonne Loriod, and wrote

his magnificent *Turangalla Symphony* for her), it was invented by Maurice Martenot in 1928, and wails, electrically. Compare the Theremin, which after a most solid start, was ignored by composers and relegated to film soundtracks and — horrors — The Beach Boys

p is for **professional composer**
You turn it on, and it does the work for you. A computer programme that can transcribe played notes straight to notation, it renders moot almost all the questions raised on this page

q is for **quartettone**
Otherwise known as the notes in the cracks on a piano. Everyone else uses them, from muezzins to bluesmen to Techno kids with samplers and tin ears. Western composition doesn't. Another example of the incompetent tyranny of the written score (though Indian *raga* is cheerfully notated). Czech composer Alois Hába composed in quartettone — he used two pianos, one tuned a quarter note down from the first. American composer/hobo Harry Partch invented a system that divided the octave into no less than 43 pitches, and built his own instruments to play them

r is for **rca computer mk 2**
In the days when a single computer took up the floor of a building, this legendary machine was the first to

be dedicated to the mind-bogglingly complex operations needed to build up music-like sounds from pure sound-waves, and — handily — to compute the kinds of mathematical permutations and transformations that Milton Babbitt, the American composer most closely associated with this branch of music, thought necessary to generate the music of the future (meaning his own)

s is for **silver apples of the moon**
Batflying, the first piece of 'classical' music composed directly onto record was Morton Subotnick's electronic piece for Nonesuch in 1967, years after the other musics caught on. What's more, almost no composer followed it up. Writing the notes out first is clearly a hard habit to break.

t is for **total serialism**
The Second Vienna School (see entry) suggested choosing the notes by a predetermined system. After the war, Darmstadt orthodox went hogwild organising everything mathematically (rhythm, volume, timbre, trike, who plays your music, who listens...)

u is for **ultrasonics**
And other things we can't quite hear. Very often the best bits of music happen up in the dogwhistle zone, where the upper overtones dance. Machines can prove this, but they can't use it the way catgut

and hollow sticks can

v is for **second vienna school**
19th century chromatic harmony got so elaborate that there weren't any wrong notes any more, or unacceptable chords: the emancipation of dissonance! 12-tone composition, as developed by Schoenberg and his pupils Berg and Webern, was an attempt to provide a logical system for choosing one dissonant over another — the 12 available semitones now lived in a democracy, no note more important than another (provided, especially in Webern, they always appeared in the same order).

w is for **we come to the river**
As systems of composition became more recondite, some composers tried to reach audiences by other methods. Hans Werner Henze's 60s opera marnes revolutionary Marxist politics with startling performance theatre — the music is entirely percussive, the percussionist alone on a second stage, hurling himself from instrument to instrument

x is for **xannis xenakis**
The one-eyed former fighter with the Greek Resistance in WW2, who studied architecture under Le Corbusier, is one of the few composers who actually knows what he's talking about when he brings up the subject of maths.

y is for **ylem**
In 1972, Karlheinz Stockhausen at last became the first significant composer of his day to write a piece beginning with Y. To prove he had not betrayed his cosmic muse, he notes that Ylem translates as the "period of isolation of the Universe"

z is for **frank zappa**
Well, where would you put him? In the A-Z of rock? He despises rock! On his 15th birthday he phoned up Varese, and then namechecked him on his first LP. Boulez has conducted his orchestral pieces, and if Frank doesn't have an entry in Grove himself, his 18th century ancestor Francesco Zappa does □

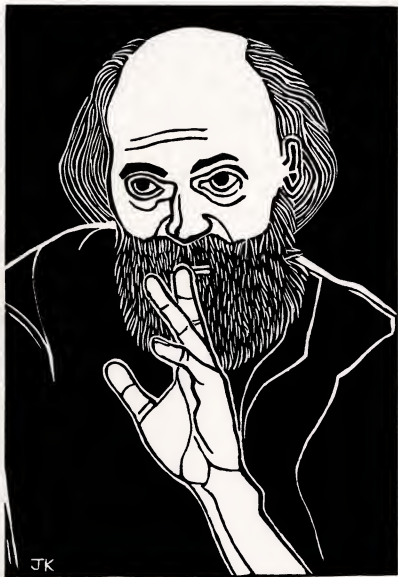






SMIRNOFF

THE OTHER SIDE.



Estonian composer Arvo Pärt is an unlikely star — a religious recluse

whose sensibility is more in tune with the deep past than

the present. Rob Young goes in search of the

ancient spirits that haunt Pärt's

music. Illustration by

Julian Kulpa.



faithing the music

he won't talk to the press.

I have his home phone number but am forbidden to use it. If this is intended to make me feel like I've just been given a hotline to His Holiness, then it works. Arvo Pärt is always mentioned in the same breath as the other recently emerged, 'religious-flavoured' composers (Tavener, MacMillan, Gavin Bryars, as well as the classical industry's current dream-ticket, Göreck), but the actual

words used of Pärt usually begin and end there. Almost all his records are released through a fortunate and very close relationship with Manfred Eicher's ECM label; they sell in the same voluminous (by the classical business's standards) quantities as other New Music bestsellers, yet he's still by no means a truly household name. To me he's always resembled the classic image of the fairytale hermit, the kind of wizened old figure itinerant princes would encounter at the roadside, granting wishes or spouting curses. So what sets Pärt apart, what musical qualities and values allow him to retain his distanced but privileged position?

There's a firm protective aura surrounding Pärt. It's impossible for the curious to get near him, especially now that he's ensconced somewhere working on a major new work, *Adam's Lament*, which early reports indicate will be a two-hour oratorio that forsakes his obsession with Latin liturgical texts for a Russian Orthodox sacred tract. A new CD, released in October by ECM (ECM 1505), completes the recorded cycle of evangelical settings from the last ten years with *Te Deum* (1985) and *Magnificat* (1989), and brings us further up to date by the inclusion of the *Berliner*

Messe (1990), a celebratory mass written ten years after Berlin became his new home in the West. This last piece is entirely in contrast to the devastating grief of his *Miserere* (1989), written for the vocal Hilliard Ensemble and released as ECM 1430. The hushed and fractured syllables clothed with silence, followed by electric guitar-boosted, trinnabulous climaxes that comprise the *Miserere* created a mood I've never otherwise encountered at classical performances when it was played at the beginning of 92 in King's Chapel in Cambridge. Surrounded by weeping members of the audience at the end, you felt the possibility that composed music might still be able to cause the kind of legendary extreme reactions unimaginable in today's sedate concertgoers (hysterical bawling at Shostakovich's *Fifth Symphony* in Stalin's Moscow, fistcuffs and consternation at Stravinsky, Varèse etc.). But the *Berlin Mass*, while retaining Pärt's trademark solemnity, also has a newer confidence, a surer motion free of the explosive doubting passages discernible in earlier works. Although you couldn't call it mellifluous, it sounds as though he's found harmony between ancient musics and modernism's pluralist Babel. This is the one, if any, to cross him over to Tavener-whetted appetites.

"I take music", wrote George Steiner in *Real Presences*, "to be the naming of the naming of life." Steiner's logic privileges music above literature/language, the artforms that claim to form close parallels with lived experience. Music is prior to all this, singing the need to make art's engagement in the first place.

If this in turn implies that the deepest, most purely 'musical' musics are those that enact or seem to exist in a timeframe before language established the parameters of our cultural experience, Steiner's book represents one of the first and most explicit attempts to escape from deconstruction's nihilist critique, postmodernism's primordial supermarket. If a

society's music — or its reaction to it — is one of the most telling and immediately obvious gauges of how it is faring, then we could take the vigorous support of the successful new breed of emphatically tonal, sombrely meditative composers as a positive sign that, at least spiritually (as far as it's possible still to be so), those who've been affected by the music are prepared to invest in a newfound optimism again. But it can't be as simple as this: the quality of music is inevitably altered by being filtered through the marketing process. Any record retailer will tell you that the rush on Göreck's *Third Symphony* began well before any of the advertising hype got underway, it genuinely was the extraordinary way the music sounded that began to drive people crazy when they heard it over the airwaves. Yet after the words about the music start to rush in, the listening experience is irrevocably altered. How easy is it to respond appropriately to the awesome, shattered melodic emotions of its third movement if you know that you've just parted cash for "Britain's best-selling classical CD"? More to the point, with this kind of 'success', and with so many critical hammers poised to fall on his subsequent endeavours, this can't fail to influence Göreck to some extent when he next picks up his ink and manuscript. (There are signs that he does give little mind to, and is pretty amused by, the mercenary attentions of the West. At an Elektra Nonesuch press conference earlier this year during his visit to the UK, he doodled a couple of staves of musical notation to illustrate a point. After setting it aside, he made a show of tearing it up after hacks lunged for the footsack, greedy for a saleable memento.)

David James, The Hilliard Ensemble's mercurial counterpoint, has been as far inside this music as anyone's likely to get. Having witnessed Part's work taking shape in front of him, he's well placed to comment about the delicacy of the composer's position in relation to modern performance practices, and is revealing about the composer's working methods. The recording session photographs of Part in the booklet of his new CD show the composer sitting along the darkened aisles of the ancient church at Lohja, Finland, pointing out details of the 14th century frescoes or listening from behind pillars, hand concealing much of his face. David James agrees: "That's a fair reflection of what it's like, actually. He walks around different parts of the church, listening, then suddenly he hears the right timbre and goes 'That's what I want.' And so very involved, very attentive. During the recording sessions the music is still evolving, and his approach to writing is like having a baby: you bring it into the world and try to guide it along certain paths until the moment when suddenly it leaves home. Your influence is no more, you've done as much as you can until it disappears and you have to let go."

Born 58 years ago in Estonia. Part spent nine years working as a producer on Estonian Radio, which put him in the favourable position of having access to recordings of the latest developments in music from the outside world. His 60s compositions use a serial idiom that's nevertheless 'impure', shot through at crucial moments with tonally-resolved harmony. It's moments like these, such as the first two movements of his 1966 *Second Symphony*, that Part seems most obsessed with, and his later, more familiar work is assembled entirely of these crystalline, glimmering instants. In the *Second Symphony* they act as antiphons to various aural depictions of confusion: the first movement's opening rubberduck-like ensemble, the second's scabbling motive tossed around among the horns and woodwinds. Between 1967 and 1976, however, there's a lapse something was happening to decrease the quantity of compositional work he was publishing. 1976 (the year of the Göreck *Third*) brought a sudden new spate of pieces for solo piano, voices, and the orchestral *Ku Bach Oskas Mesilas Põrnud* (*If Bach Had Kept Bees*). It's a musical metaphor, crude in its way but only in the sense that all Part's work is crude, roughly cut, in the manner of medieval art: the strings swarm in whorls of angry noise but are gradually overlaid with a graceful theme that's close to the easy tonality of the pedal basslines in Bach's *Orchestral Suites*. It's justifiably

tempting to see this as the story in miniature of Part's reinvention, papering over modernism's aggressive pluralism with something more singlemindedly committed to a unified vision. Even now, he's apparently concerned to distance himself from his avant garde origins. It's apparently heard an account of him in a London branch of Farringdon's astonished to see the BIS CD of his three symphonies as if they didn't know previously of its existence, and asking the sales assistants if they'd mind not stocking it in future. Such tales suggest an interest in the reception of his music in the public domain which undermine to some extent the popular image of the man in retreat from the world at large.

Part seems to value his relative anonymity, and for this reason ECM is the perfect shelter for his creations. ECM's supremo Manfred Eicher vastly accelerated Part's reputation when, entranced, he recorded *Tabula Rasa* for the label in 1984. It's clear from the sheer sound of all Part's post-76 music that of all the crop of devotional composers he commands the most reverence by the deeply earnest seriousness of the music itself. There's an intense doggedness about the sustained chordal lines in *Frates*, which exists in four arrangements for different chamber and early-instrument ensembles as well as a string orchestra version, a seriousness that's never turned into any kind of dialogue. There's no ironic relief provided by sardonic interludes or crouched-hiary with which so many 20th century composers have felt compelled to break up any sustained statement of belief or logic.

David James sees this as Part's most significant contribution to modern music; the particular terrain he has marked out as his own. "He completely ignores the thoughts and taboos of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It's genuine, it's not trying to prove anything, not trying to be clever. The first time we met him he tore up some bits of paper on the table and dropped this thing, saying 'I see this as blue... think of it floating, that colour.' It's also a music which actually fails if there's a dominance of technique and rhetoric over passion and intuition. If you overemphasise in order to impose something that isn't there on the music, it imposes on it. Someone's pulled the communication cord between performer and listener and there's a break of the wire between the two. It's different in romantic music: a different world."

You could say the wires have been down since Schoenberg's subordination of the tonal arrangements we happen to call 'harmony'. The latter part of this century hasn't been receptive to the idea of the 'great composer'. Stockhausen, the most radical shaper of the postwar sound of music, became the standard butt of jokes about the 'unlistenability' of modern music, composition's 'bricks in the Tate'. The appeal of the Spiritualists stems from the way they've allowed the music to do the talking, and left it to marketers and the media to argue its claims. Now that composers are signing exclusive contracts with record companies, it's easy to make the mistake of judging success solely on CD sales (and thinking in corporate terms: "the new James MacMillan album" etc). But the accessibility of Part's music has led to more public performances worldwide than that of his contemporaries — it's given life by thousands of musicians, amateur and professional, who don't find themselves having to vault huge technical hurdles. There's also the fact that he won't write music to order, so a stack of commissions won't pile up and then be rushed to fit deadlines.

Tavener's world, so quickly gripping admittedly, is completely bound up now with the Orthodox Church (he's set a hefty number of their liturgies). It tacitly implies that you can only engage with it fully by embracing the faith. With Part, such imperatives don't exist. He's private about the nature of his religious beliefs, and in effect it's he who has made the bigger sacrifice by investing in the past rather than allowing himself to use the precise languages of his own time. The result is a music that may sound more like the future than we can yet know. □



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"hearing John Cage and hearing The New York Dolls. Together those were the pivotal points in my life." Susan Stenger, Band Of Susans' bassist and flautist, sees no disparity between her musical influences. Neither does the group's co-founder Robert Poss, who began his career as a power trio guitar hero and then graduated to collaborations with NYC guitar orchestrator Rhys Chatham and electronic composer Nicolas Collins.

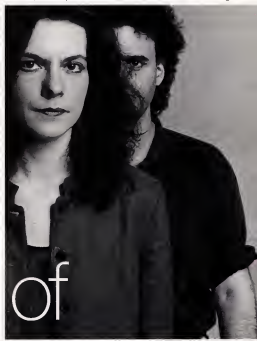
Band Of Susans, a crucible of high art and trash rock culture, was initially formed as a one-off project when Stenger weaned of "people sitting on folding chairs watching [her] play" and Poss became obsessed with stripping guitar sound down to its essence. Seven years and four LPs later, the group's commitment to sonic exploration and deconstruction continues. Their most recent album, *Vel* (Rough Trade/Restless), features more prominent bass, drums and vocals than previous releases, but it is still the spiky, slucing, tugging sounds from their three guitars, processed and metamorphosed through distortion pedals, which dominate the sound.

The group's sound integrates ideas taken piecemeal from non-rock sources. Their current home—the East Village, NYC—has a long tradition of rock/experimental crosspollinations (the Knitting Factory, Phil Niblock's art spaces, Glenn Branca's guitar orchestras). But first came their hometown of Buffalo, in New York state, whose Center For The Creative And Performing Arts was, in the 70s, the residence of a variety of international artists.

It was in Buffalo that Stenger studied with Czech flautist and composer Petr Kotik. Kotik introduced her to the music of Earle Brown, LaMonte Young and Jackson Mac Low. In addition, his open compositions—where pairs of instruments commence and stop playing without a predetermined harmonic structure—changed her ideas about sound organization. "[Previously] I had thought that there was a beginning where you could introduce the theme, a middle that would throw in a bunch of variations, and at

looking for. The only way I can describe it has to do with rich overtones and distortion, this evocative sound."

Blind intensity is the crux of their songwriting approach. The music is composed first, each instrument's part is constructed from the barest aural elements, then the points where each instrument intersects are arranged



high trash Band of Susans

the end, a finale." She joined Kotik's chamber groups and debuted with John Cage's *Concert For Piano And Orchestra*; later she would become friends with Cage and play the majority of his "chance operation" pieces on the New York New Music circuit.

"In most ways you listen to Cage and you listen to Band Of Susans and you go, 'What the fuck? There's no connection whatsoever,'" she says when pressed to explain Cage's influence. "It wasn't something I was conscious of, but what really drew me to Cage's music was his attempt to get rid of all the habits, the clichés. That was why I was interested in what Robert was doing. He had been in these formulaic bands, then he threw it all away and pretty much locked himself in a room with all his equipment and started over."

Says Poss: "I was looking for a certain sound that I heard in my head that I had never been able to make, that I had never heard anyone else do. I spent about six months in my apartment, plugging different distortion boxes together and trying different guitars. Eventually I found the sound I was

The intersections create layers of sound, which in turn form a drone, not unlike those in the music of both Young and Niblock. It is a process of consonance—a densely concentrated exploration into the depths of one musical element, its texture, its dimensions, its reaction when juxtaposed with other elements. One of the group's earlier albums, *The Word And The Flesh*, was built entirely around the E-chord.

"You can't make a muzak Band Of Susans song," says Stenger. "You can use recognizable elements, but the song is the sound of the song. It's not the chord progression, it's the sound of all those interacting parts. There's no one instrument that plays the songs and everyone fills in around it. It's always like a piece here, a piece there, pieced together like building blocks. One guitar playing by itself wouldn't make any sense."

"We have this reputation," adds Poss, "of being these serious composer types with no sense of humour, as if we sit around in lab coats creating this very sterile environment. There's nothing further from the truth. What motivates us and makes us able to talk about [our music] is inspiration, passion and our love of this kind of music. So although we are able to break it down into snappy metaphors, Susan and I don't talk this way. We just say, 'listen to this' or 'let's play against this.' We don't sit there and compose like a lot of people do." **JULIE TARASKA**

Band Of Susans play the UK in November. See "Sounding Off" for details.

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**ALBERT
COLLINS**

In the cafe bar of the Photographer's Gallery off London's Charing Cross Road, Noel McKoy is looking at a photograph of Mohammed Ali and talking with a friend. The picture, taken in 1966 by the American photographer Gordon Parks (who would go on to direct the early Blaxploitation films *Shaft* and *Shaft's Big Score*), portrays the great boxer leaning against a staircase somewhere, wearing a jacket to die for and an expression that says, "Don't fuck with me." I don't know what Noel is saying about the picture because I am sitting at a table several feet away. But later when



PHOTOGRAPH BY GORDON PARKS

I ask him about early heroes and sources of inspiration, he says, "In my life certain people have inspired me. Ali, certainly, Malcolm X, these people had strong characters, a will about them. They gave me the strength to go out and do it."

Today, Noel McKoy, a Black British soul singer who has also performed lovers rock, Black rock, experimental jazz funk with Steve Williamson, acted in the London fringe with (ahem) Hazel O'Connor, produced a documentary series on London youth for TVS, but is perhaps best known for his work with The James Taylor Quartet (now JTQ), sees himself, or rather his music, performing a similar function for the generations coming up behind him. It sounds corny but it's 100 per cent sincere.

"People talk about Noel McKoy the singer, but I'm a songwriter first. The songs I write are social songs, they're spiritual, to do with the way people live their lives, the emotions they go through. They come from within, but there's a strong social perspective in there too."

"But in this country, for a black artist coming through with a serious, positive message, to be taken seriously is very hard. [The record industry] find it easier to deal with black people being negative, degrading women, being uninspiring to their fellow blacks. They'll let that through because it fits their image of black people. They find it very difficult to deal with a strong, social black artist."

Perhaps that's the reason it's taken so long for us to get to hear Noel's debut album *Full Circle*, a record which distills these notions of social and artistic responsibility and community down to the catch-all concept of 'Spiritual Social Soul'.

As early as September 92, the hype was running fast and loose in anticipation of the record's release. Too fast, too loose, as it turned out. Its appearance was continually put back by talk of various independent and major label deals (which came to nothing), as well as Noel's commitments to touring with JTQ on the back of the release of their *Supernatural Feeling* album. It's finally being released this month (preceded by a single, "On The Streets"), remixed and with a couple of extra tracks added to the original planned release, but still sounding like one of the best UK soul records of recent years, a compelling set of contemporary R&B, with a raw yet undemonstrative live feel that sets it apart from the more studio-bound recordings of such contemporaries as Don-E or Omar.

The record features input from, of all people, AOR duo Climie Fisher, who co-wrote the hook-laden "What Are We Gonna Do?" Like most of the projects he's involved in, however, the best thing about the record is Noel McKoy's voice ("a hoarse, imploring soul haunting digitalized Rare Grooves," as Nathan West described it in *The Wire* 111).

"I just do what comes naturally," says Noel, rather disarmingly, in response to a query on his approach to the singer's craft. "But I've been influenced by a lot of people. When I was growing up [in South London], my parents would be playing records around the house. Ella Fitzgerald, ska, mento, The Beatles, Frank Sinatra. Then later, it was my older sister, playing Earth Wind & Fire, Steve Wonder..."

A key motif running through the songs of Noel McKoy is the concept of family: not in the bourgeois Western sense, but related to the kind of informal, integrated, mutually supportive community that, aside from anything else, has been a constant ingredient in black music over the last 25 years, from Sly Stone and P-Funk to HipHop's extended posess.

"That's part of our culture," he agrees. "From way back in Africa, when villages would have ritual dances and music, the whole community would be a part of it. It's something that's in us, a natural thing."

"And the way I was brought up is what inspires me today. I grew up in a big house, my mother's sisters lived with us, so there were always people around, playing music. And throughout my career my family have helped me out. I used to record at my brother's studio in Brixton... and it was my father who lent me the money to put out the first two McKoy singles ['I'm Ready' in 1988 and (but of course) 'Family' in 1990]."

Noel has his own label now, Right Track Records. Its first non-McKoy release will be a single from London rapper MCD. "He's already known by EPMD, Public Enemy and Paris," enthuses Noel. "He's very militant, like Ice Cube, telling it like it is, with good beats." Does he see any contradiction between the kind of adversarial, separatist policies emerging from the HipHop Nation, and the more conciliatory, 'positive' messages being received from Black UK performers like himself, Young Disciples, D-Influence, etc? "It's just two sides of the same coin. The way the Americans come over is rougher, tougher, a lot more attitude. But that's understandable. Look what they've gone through in the last 200 years. We've had it easy." **TONY HERRINGTON**

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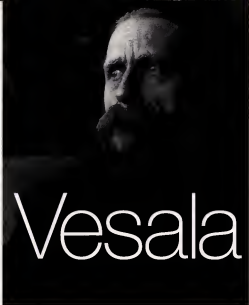


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A Quartet Book

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Edward Vesala



"I was playing more like European free jazz in the 60s... Even now, if I play drums, I want to play free. But my band is now a kind of compromise between free playing and composition." Edward Vesala, one of Europe's leading jazz drummers and composers, is touring Britain with his band Sound And Fury this month (see "Sounding Off" for details). We'll come to the "jazz" bit later, just now he's trying to explain, in a phone interview from Finland, how he started out. His English makes up in energy and enthusiasm what it lacks in syntax, and I've done my best to convey his animated opinions and convictions.

"I was drumming many years before I started composing. I was doing some pieces in the 60s, small ideas. But then I played more free music." Vesala's progress shows a pattern common among the most original players who emerged in Europe during the 60s and for whom Miles Davis is the paradigm. By the 70s, he was no longer interested in the unchallenging "happy music" (his term for hard-bop revivalism). It was then that he stopped playing as a sideman, and in 1974 released *Nan Madal*, an early album for Manfred Eicher's ECM label. With its superlative recording standards, ECM has continued to provide an ideal context for Vesala's work.

Sound And Fury, the band he has led since 1986, grew out of a summer music school he organised in Helsinki: it had been difficult to find musicians of his own generation with the same forward-looking attitude, and these players are 15 or 20 years younger than the leader (who was born in 1945). "They are my sons," he says, "kind of family." He sees the band as more than just a musical aggregation; it expresses an "ideology to live. We study how to live." Not like the Sun Ra family I hope? (Ra was known as a bit of an autocrat.) Edward laughs; this is at worst a genial despot. "I don't like how people live now... More humanity, not this fucking machine."

Most of his compositions haven't seen the recorded light of day. Sound And Fury is, he says, at the Afro-American end of his output, but it isn't really jazz, some pieces seem to be influenced by jazz, others show a more classical or folk influence. "I never copied anything," he affirms. "I know

many good drummers. But I mostly looked at sax players. Though I never copied anybody, even when I started to play." Coltrane's work was, he says, a dominant influence, as it had to be on musicians of Vesala's generation. But originality is an article of faith, and it comes across in the restless search for new textures that characterises the music of Sound And Fury.

The band has produced three classic albums on ECM. *Lumi*, "one of the finest jazz albums of the 1980s", according to Cook and Morton's *Penguin Guide To Jazz*, appeared in 1986. *Ode To The Death Of Jazz* and *Invisible Storm* appeared at three-year intervals after that — Vesala works slowly. Solo tracks are not much in evidence, and the drummer's extraordinary non-metrical style, particularly on the darker, up-tempo numbers, gradually comes to dominate the ensemble. On these, you get a sense of the "snow, darkness and winter" that Vesala says must influence Finnish composers. The orchestration is distinctive, favouring a kind of Europeanised New Orleans heterophony. In contrast are the airy, weightless arrangements for light-toned instruments such as flute, soprano sax and harp.

"Melody is very important for my work," Vesala insists, "especially for percussion, it's not only rhythm." Most audiences are oblivious of the melodic potential of the drums, but then so, he believes, are drummers. "Mostly drummers don't play in a melodic way, they play rhythm." In the last couple of years, Edward has been working on a composition for percussion ensemble, involving players from classical as well as jazz backgrounds, with a mix of instruments from mimbass to Indonesian percussion. Percussion-only is a new departure for him. "That field is fantastic," he exclaims eagerly. The masterpiece has been sent to Manfred Eicher, in the meantime, a new Sound And Fury album is due from ECM in 1994.

Surprisingly, this is Vesala's first tour of Britain. The band will be a seven piece, playing newer material, plus some from *Invisible Storm*. If the sound of Scandinavian means, for you, the often-heard grey voice of Jan Garbarek, Edward Vesala's Sound And Fury challenges that assumption with a life-affirming musical vision that's quite unique. **ANDY HAMILTON**

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l a s t r e f u g e





sound whirl

Have those eternal children The Cocteau Twins really grown up to face their responsibilities in an adult world? Andy Smith thinks so, maybe. Photography by Mel Yates.

If you can visualise Liz sitting in a sound-proof room, not speaking to anyone from 12 till midnight, having all these fears about whether it was right or not... That's how it was."

Simon Raymonde, The Cocteau Twins' bass player of ten years smiles and throws a protective glance in Liz Fraser's direction. The singer, a small, almost ghostly presence who talks in a near whisper and whose rarely-completed sentences are punctuated with nervous laughter and intense pauses, smiles faintly back, as Raymonde continues.

"One deadline had passed and another one was approaching. Our manager was going, 'Okay, at six o'clock I'm leaving and I have to have a name.' At ten to six, Liz came in and went, 'Help!'"

This is how the band came by the title for their seventh album, *Four-Calender Café*. The story is typical of The Cocteau Twins, because the phrase, as applied to the record, is completely without meaning. It's derived from the book *Blue Highway*, a best-selling road novel by the native American writer William Least Heat Moon, which Fraser happened to be reading at the time. In the book, Moon grades American road-side eateries according to how many calendars they have on the walls. A four-calendar café is a pretty good one. As a phrase it says nothing about The Cocteau's music.

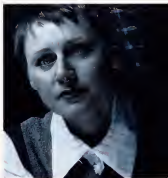
The fact is, Liz hates choosing titles, detests the idea that someone might see them and pre-judge the content of her songs, thereby pre-judging the content of her head. And events in that region have, up to now, been only slightly more open to scrutiny than the Pope's dirty laundry basket.

Since Liz and her partner Robin Guthrie descended from the Scottish town of Grangemouth in 1982, this fear of interpretation has all but defined their sound. At its best, on releases like *Head Over Heels* (1983) and *Treasure* (1984), the spectral, multi-layered textures of Guthrie's guitars provided a perfect foil for the glacial purity of that extraordinary voice. Every group in the world insists that they make music only to please themselves, but this time it seems to be true. Listening to these records — or reading the evasive interviews that accompany them (these people once spent two hours talking about polar bears) felt like stepping into some dense, private forest in which you knew you weren't particularly welcome. All the more reason to be there.

Like The Smiths, The Cocteau's seemed to arrive and continue to thrive in splendid hermetically sealed isolation. Of course, one could hear echoes of Siouxsie and The Cure in their work, but nothing definite. They, in turn, influenced a range of indie bands, most of whom ended up as 4AD stable-mates (Lush, Dead Can Dance, His Name Is Alive, Throwing Muses). Yet surprisingly they've spawned few copyists. "I think it took people a long time to work out how they made that noise," says their former boss, 4AD supremo Ivo Watts-Russell, by way of explanation. Indeed it could be said that only now, courtesy the current passion for Ambient, are other artists finding original ways of applying identifiably Twins-ian principles to their own work. When asked what's currently on duty in his cassette-deck, Guthrie replies Seefeel (the superb London Ambient quartet who are down as major Cocteau fans). None of this is surprising. In a sense Liz and Robin have been making Ambient music for 12 years. By their account, this wasn't because they wanted to, it was because they had to.

This reluctance to be understood could also be frustrating. By the release of *Blue Bell Knoll* in 1988, the pair seemed to be abusing the license afforded by their famously impressionistic approach. Without legions of wannabe Cocteaus to snap at their heels and keep them moving on, the music became ever more impenetrable. Fraser even abandoned the conventions of known language, choosing instead to contrive her own, a tongue of oblique murmurs and sighs. At this point, though *Knoll* was well-received, they seemed dangerously close to self-parody. After all, as Wittgenstein noted, there can be no such thing as a private language. What were the Cocteaus hiding from?

Four-Calender Café is all the more remarkable in the light of this. The



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and another was approaching.
Our manager was going, 'At six
o'clock I'm leaving and I need a
name.' At ten to six Liz came in
and went 'Help!'"**

chiming, churning splendour of Guthrie and Raymonde's instrumentation remains intact, but rarified and distilled. Quite simply, there's less of it.

"I've consciously been stripping things back," Guthrie explains, when asked about this newfound clarity. "In the past, I've always wanted one more overdub, one more melody, because I'm terrible for thinking that my music isn't good enough, so I put in a few more frailty overdubs, then it'll be all right. If you take something like *Blue Bell Knoll* and strip away the overdubs, you'll find that there's not much there. On that album, the songs are made up of lots of little bits of nothing. These ones are more substantial. The ideas are more focused."

Hints of what was to come first appeared three years ago on the *Heaven Or Las Vegas* album, in the shimmering shapes of songs like "Cherry-Coloured Funk" and the single, "Iceblink Luck". Guthrie now dismisses that album as "a bit iffy", though this seems an unreasonably harsh verdict. What is true, however, is to say that the period surrounding *Heaven* was a turbulent one for the band. Guthrie experienced most of it through a drug-induced haze, his famously taciturn behaviour becoming increasingly pronounced. On one occasion, at the end of the "Heaven" tour in, appropriately enough, Las Vegas, he demanded £100 from his publicist before he would talk to an English journalist who had been flown in specifically for the purpose. And a further £100 for a photo session with another magazine. Later, he was accused (again, with hindsight, quite unreasonably) of having ruined Lush's *Spooky* album through chemically-inspired nonchalance. His escape from this destructive state, he suggests, is what helped shape *Four-Calculator Cafe*.

"I can't fucking remember any of that time," he laughs. "I was just out there, I did too much, I'm that type of person."

Self-destructive?

"You could say that! I had all the early warning signs when I was younger. I mean, Sid Vicious was someone I looked up to! Keith Levene was the cool one in PLU. 'Cos he was the junkie. Naturally, when it came to me, it just seemed to fit the bill. But life is a whole different ball game when you're living it on its own terms, without a crutch."

"The majority of the work on this album was done once I'd got clean. It's given me a lot of confidence to try things I haven't tried before. I'd got into a very insular frame of mind, as you do. It's great once you've stopped shaking and you can actually play your guitar again. In the past, I've only felt as good a person as the last record was. If people didn't like the record, I always felt that it was because they didn't like me."

Guthrie's cleaning-up act, which finds expression in the strikingly sweet production encountered on tunes such as "Bluebeard" and the breath-taking "Summerhead" — two of their best songs ever — is reflected also in Fraser's lyrical approach to *Four-Calculator Cafe*. She seems to be singing about herself, grappling with her own thoughts and feelings. This, she says, took courage, much of which was supplied by the birth of Lucy Belle, their daughter, in September 1989, as *Heaven Or Las Vegas* was being recorded. Simon's son, Stanley, was born in the same month a year later. It's no coincidence that The Cocteau's studio, in which we sit looking over a beautiful stretch of the Thames, is called September Sound. This is something Liz doesn't mind talking about.

"I feel like I've rediscovered a part of myself. You see, I always thought that I was having a great time. I really wanted Lucy, really badly. I became convinced that it was a biological thing and that I couldn't have her. Women reach a stage where their bodies are telling them it's time to have a baby and I thought that was what was happening to me. In the end, though, I realised that wasn't true for me and that I really wanted a baby because I hated my life. I spent five years more or less in a coma. What I had just wasn't enough and I wanted a change. You don't have to have a baby to change your life, of course, but I didn't realise that at the time!"

What would have happened if you hadn't had Lucy Belle?

"I'd have been in serious trouble. I'd be into a lot of unhealthy things. It's very sobering, being a parent, both physically and mentally."

I couldn't help noticing the line "I accept myself for what I am" on "Mud And Dark".

"Oh, that's less! That's what I want to be like. I'm nothing like that. I say it to myself all the time, but I don't believe it."

Why not?

"The same reasons as everyone else. Somewhere along the line someone has convinced you that you're not good enough and that you're always going to have to compensate for that, try and catch up so you can be the same as everybody else."

Fraser may already be regretting the intelligibility of *Four-Calculator Cafe*. One reviewer, for instance, suggested that "Bluebeard" was about domestic violence, going on to draw some rather unpleasant conclusions from this alleged fact. The band, perhaps wisely, won't comment on this. But intelligible or not, the album's chief feature is still the aggressive uncertainty, the same tentative quality which made The Cocteau seem like a refuge of sanity throughout the ultra-positive 80s. Some things haven't changed, and in all probability never will. Sit in Fraser's company for a while and you quickly realise where this derives from. Ask her, for instance, why her writings are becoming clearer.

"I have trouble answering these questions," she says quietly, staring down at the table in front of her, "because there's something in me that's constantly sabotaging all these positive things that I want to say. It's really hard for me to kick that butt and carry on being optimistic. Sorry, I've forgotten the question!"

It was about your words

"Oh yeah. Most of the time I feel as though I don't know what I'm doing or what's going on. There's a really hard, tough core deep inside there, but the periphery is weak and fragile and this is the thing that everybody picks up on, because this is the thing I find it really hard to get over. To get the strong side of me out and let everyone see it's very painful and frightening for me."

Oh, I've forgotten the point I was making again!

It was about your words.

"Right. This is what I was saying: this deep 'knowing' — it sounds really pretentious to put it like that, but I can't think of another way to say it — this core of me that knows what's best and what I'm doing, it gets me out of trouble. By the skin of my teeth, I'm getting along. This is what's telling me that what I've got to do is get honest, to stop doing what I was doing. Unfortunately, and this is typical of me, I tend to go from one extreme to the other. To go from an album like *Blue Bell Knoll*, which is so heavily disguised and removed from reality, to *Heaven Or Las Vegas*, or even more to this one, where everything on it is in English and it's all audible... It's extreme, I think. But it seems important for me to do that."

Why? I ask, and there's a pause which seems to last an eternity.

"Um, I don't know. I think if I hadn't changed, I don't know what would have happened. Maybe I wouldn't still be singing. I wouldn't have carried on. Something had to change."

"I've just recently realised that I'm a really secretive person and that I'm constantly covering up for myself. I'm only just realising how much. I don't really know what's happening. I hope it doesn't mean that I won't allow myself to do more things like *Blue Bell Knoll*. I'd like to be able to do everything. You see, on that album, I was still expressing the same things. I was still feeling the same feelings, but I wasn't getting caught up in them. I was just feeling into a fucking microphone. I really was getting caught up in them on this album. It was very painful. And the lyrics aren't even that explicit."

Simon, who's been watching Liz in silence, interjects:

"I think they are explicit. This record's about you."

"Maybe. I can't tell." Fraser smiles that awkward, ambiguous smile again. "There's obviously a lot more going on than I'm letting on." □

"When he was alive nobody wanted him," said Kippie's lifelong friend General Duze, shortly after Kippie Moeketsi died. "Now that he is dead, everyone has much to say." 1993 is the tenth anniversary of the South African altoist's death, and his story is surely worth telling for, if it tells the tale of how a man shaped the music of his times, it also tells a sadder story — of how his times destroyed the man and his music. Coincidentally, 1993 is the 25th anniversary, also, of the arrival in England of Chris McGregor's Blue Notes, a band whose memory is similarly linked with tragedy, who also battled the times, bringing their music from the purple hills of Pondoland, to share their ample gifts with audiences in the London of the late 60s.

Comparison is apt because both the Blue Notes and Kippie were forces in music who energised and revitalised the scenes they plugged into. Kippie, however, though he was a presence and an abiding influence, was not as a musician able painstakingly to build up a catalogue. As a result, as the years pass, he becomes increasingly a marginal star, a man in the shadows of memory — all of which makes the task of assessing his contribution to South African jazz as tricky as it's intriguing.

In fact, Kippie's name has suffered a fate he nor General Duze could have foreseen. It has posthumously become a by-word for something bigger, in many ways he has been transformed from a real, historical figure into an archetypal, almost allegorical, suffering artist, a move which — curiously — obscures his contribution even as it celebrates it. He has come to represent a near-mythic 50s, that era in South Africa before apartheid chewed its way to the very heart of South African life. This legendary age, only partially rooted in fact, became part of a narrative of consolation really only created, by the South African left, during the crass years of the mid-80s, brought into being by (amongst other things) Malcolm Purkey's play

Sophiatown, a township musical about life before the community was destroyed, and the retro-jazz of the African Jazz Pioneers. Of prime importance in this process of reclamation was the creation of an alternative canon — alternative to official versions of the past which 'omitted' to mention the destruction of places like Sophiatown, or the forcible relocation of its population in Soweto. By dying in 1983, Kippie was all too easily seconded into this canon, when he had a pub named after him in Newtown, Johannesburg (a pub which subsequently became famous) his mythological role, as romantic jazz figure, was assured.

But, though history has a cold eye and critics have demanding standards, a glance at those he played alongside (Hugh Masekela, Abdullah Ibrahim, Mackay Davashe, Minam Makeba), and for a moment in the early 60s, McGregor himself), and at the bands which he either played in or formed (particularly the seminal Jazz Epistles which included Masekela, Ibrahim and the trombonist Jonas Gwangwa) indicate that, wherever post-war South African jazz went, at some point Kippie was there too.

Kippie was born in 1926, and there came a point in his unhappy youth when he decided to pick up a clarinet which had been discarded by Isaiah, his older brother. (It is worth noting that the instrument wasn't, for example, a penny whistle — coming from a petit-bourgeois family from a township just outside Johannesburg, and thus heir to conventional definitions of high art, Isaiah would have wanted to be both "acceptable" and an artist, not possible with the pennywhistle, though more likely with a sax.) Soon Kippie was good enough to take up the saxophone, a move which he commented on to his friend Ntengi Piliso in his characteristically gruff way "Yah, once you know a clarinet, a saxophone is a boy."

Without many job prospects as either a musician or a manual worker, his

remembering kippie

Ten years after his death, alto saxophonist Kippie Moeketsi has been turned into a founding legend of South African jazz. Luke Alfred attempts to rediscover the man (and the musician) behind the myth.

late teens and early twenties were a bleak time for Kippie. Yet he became competent on the saxophone quickly enough, and soon found himself playing alto for such local bands as The Band In Blue and the Harlem Swingsters. During the 40s the township circuit was dangerous and demanding, with bands often having to play to restless crowds in smoky, congested shebeens (drinking-houses) or hostels. The thought of playing to an audience of psychotically stoned tsotsis (gangsters) or raw, rural, blanket-wrapped recruits to the mines and heavy industry of the Johannesburg area was presumably terrifying to someone from Kippie's background, whatever the reason, he soon began to hit a pipe (slang for smoking marijuana) or to get wrecked on skokoon (home-brewed liquor).

The Swingsters regularly played the Denver slum, a place which Kippie referred to as "E-Sidokidini" (literally "place of hell"). What rked many musicians of the day were the incessant (and often humiliating) demands made on them by such audiences. A favourite among the gangs was an old Malay standard called "Tamaté Sous" (tomato sauce), and bands would be forced, often at knife-point, to play the songs repeatedly, as spirits flagged and there was perhaps an opportunity to play something different, a knife-wielding tsotsi would step forward with an all too familiar request.

The dark humour of such stories obscures a notorious tension. Kippie sought affirmation throughout his career, yet meaningful respect — particularly in the early days — was elusive. It has become a historical commonplace to note that black musicians of the 50s (and, crucially, musicians with pretensions to artistic stature) felt simultaneously isolated and sandwiched. On the one hand they were forced to work the township circuit, often having to play standards to the tsotsis and hostel dwellers until their creativity began to be sapped; on the other, they were recruited to perform on the comparatively lucrative *sonée*-scene, where white Johannesburg

liberals indulged their fantasies of racial harmony at the musicians' expense. (After the gigs, the musicians travelled back to the townships, while the audience continued living in white suburbia.) In the musicians' eyes, neither constituency knew anything about music, and therefore neither group was able to confer the artistic authority the players sought. Kippie's long-time friend and fellow musician, Ntomi Piliso, captured part of the dilemma when he told academic and journalist, Peter Esterhuysen, "You didn't play Duke Ellington at the mines."

One way to avoid the pitfalls of the Jo'burg scene was to join a band who toured nationally. Kippie duly joined The Shantytown Sextet, an outfit who wound their way across the country with that legendary vocal group of the mid-50s The Manhattan Brothers. On the Cape Town leg of one of their early 50s tours, Kippie was introduced to a young pianist who was wearing a talismanic pair of oversized boots. His name was Adolphus Botha (known better today as Dollar Brand or Abdullah Ibrahim). The two of them struck up conversation immediately, and, with Mooketsi the younger player's mentor, compared notes and ideas. Later they listened to records too — particularly to the startling bebop of Charlie Parker and Thelonious Monk, music which represented both the promise of faraway America and the limits of what it was possible to achieve as a (black) South African jazz musician.

After Cape Town, Brand-Botha accompanied the Sextet (and the Manhattaners) to Port Elizabeth. The months in and around the city were spent experimenting with new forms, as the Sextet incorporated indigenous melodies into their repertoire for the first time. Whereas the Cape Town audiences had behaved coolly to the two bands, the Port Elizabeth people loved their new music. Indeed, but for one terrible incident, the Port Eliza-



both leg of the tour would have been a phenomenal success. But Kippie was notoriously articulate about his emotions and any fears and resentments he felt would build up until they exploded out in torrents of verbal bile. According to Peter Esterhuysen's unpublished manuscript on Kippie, when he couldn't muster up the words, he used to piss on people. One such unfortunate was the leader of the Sextet, MacKay Davashe, who, before the tour had come to an end, refused Kippie his train ticket home, an argument followed, and Kippie demonstrated his disaffection as described.

The incident with Davashe soured Kippie's relationship with the band — when the Sextet returned to Jo'burg he found other musicians to play with (though it should be noted that he worked with Davashe subsequently on several occasions). In the middle and late 50s there was a small but vibrant scene at the Modern Jazz Club, which shared premises with the Odin Cinema in Sophiatown (a Harlem-type area on the outskirts of Johannesburg). It was there that Kippie put together the legendary Jazz Epistles. Two of his protégés, Jonas Gwangwa and Hugh Masekela, played their first gigs at the Jazz Club, Kippie was also reunited with Brand-Botha, and for a year or two the band flourished.

If the atmosphere inside the Modern Jazz Club was relaxed and audiences receptive, life outside was as unpromising as it had always been. When the Epistles played white venues they were forced into the familiar "in-through-the-back-door-in-the-kitchen" routine and an incident of this kind inspired "Scully Department", probably the Epistles' most famous song. Along with "I Remember Billy", "Blues For Hughie", and "Carol's Drive", "Scully Department" was included on the Epistles' first album *Jazz Epistles Verse One*. According to Masekela, the Epistles received £78 for the sessions, it needed, however, to be split six ways — £13 each!

The 60s were a troubled decade for the country as a whole and for Kippie personally. The Sharpeville tragedy in 1960 signified that the covert oppression of previous years had entered a new, harsher phase, and when the post-Sharpeville township musical *King Kong* played in London's West End, audiences felt that it was politically tame. Although he arrived late (it's possible that he was mugged before leaving South Africa) Kippie eventually took his place in the *King Kong* orchestra. Once again he got into an argument, once again he couldn't find the words, once again (according to Esterhuysen) he resorted to pissing on his antagonist. He was bundled off to the nearest mental hospital and forced to stay there for a month. The *King Kong* gig was the only time that he played outside South Africa. Unfortunately he wasn't able — unlike Miriam Makeba, say — to take advantage of the opportunity.

When an angry and pained Dollar Brand decided to leave South Africa for Switzerland, it effectively meant that the Jazz Epistles had come to an end. One of the few highlights in the bleak decade that followed came when Kippie's compositional skills were honoured by Chris McGregor, who in 1963 included him in his short-lived Cold Castle Big Band. Within a few months of the Big Band's final performance, the Blue Notes (many of whom doubled for the Big Band) flew to Europe, after his negative experiences in London, Kippie decided to stay behind. This was another missed opportunity — perhaps the last one. Certainly it meant, in time, that unlike the original Blue Notes (Dudu Pukwana, Johnny Dyani, Mongezi Feza, Louis Moholo, Nick Moyake), Kippie wouldn't contribute directly to the revitalisation of the London jazz scene in the late 60s and 70s. With a significant fraction of a generation's talents now in exile overseas, Kippie was more isolated than ever.

"Spiritually I am dead," said Kippie in a 1968 interview. "My own friends despise me now. They have banned me from the stage, and today I hardly have a decent pair of trousers and a shirt." The years of hardship had taken their toll. Even so, there was creativity and vigour left in him: in the early 70s he was to collaborate successfully with both Dollar Brand and Pat Matshikiza — indeed, for many, his songs with Brand (recorded on Dol-

lor Brand + Three From Kippie Moekets) are among his finest.

Still, one can't help noticing that although Kippie formed bands, he never led them. So was he a minor figure whose main contribution was that of a catalyst? Looking back, Ibrahim-Brand has commented, "The music we had made at The Jazz Epistles was at the root of all Hugh (Masekela) and I had since accomplished. That was the South African group which cried out to be celebrated. And so we always came back to the Epistles, to saying how significant Kippie and the others had also been in bringing together the sounds of the two different countries [i.e. *black America* and *black South Africa*]. It was a group like no other."

Have Ibrahim and Masekela, two international political-cultural ambassadors duty-bound to consider their music's widest appeal, really accomplished anything as extraordinary as the music The Blue Notes made, the music that had such a revolutionary effect on British free jazz? Perhaps when South Africa finally enters an apartheid-free and truly democratic age we will be able to consider such questions objectively — until such time, to suggest that anyone's contribution is less than another's will always be contentious, a matter as much of politics as aesthetics. For the majority, South Africa was until recently a totalitarian society — and neither Kippie's music nor his memory are impervious to the effects of such a culture. His reserve, added to a reluctance to showcase his talent to a wider audience, has meant that although his memory has been kept alive by the South African jazz exiles, his name is relatively unknown here in Britain. As Louis Moholo, the last surviving Blue Note, tells it, Kippie was more than simply a presence and an influence, he was also a source of knowledge, "an incredible rhythm man and a beautiful solo player and improviser. And he was a good person. He was a pillar of music — not just jazz. He was in touch with all types of South African music. He was born at a time before the American music, so he had incredible knowledge — not like us guys."

In South Africa Kippie's death coincided with a period of political crisis and he has been canonised as a jazz martyr, the paradigmatic suffering jazzman. He was influential, he was also hard-done-by. But he was no saint, and his history has been partially obscured by the need for ciphers, the need to fashion alternative heroes and alternative canons.

Nonetheless, it is uncanny, when you look back at the history of South African jazz, to see how often Kippie was where it mattered most — side by side with the tradition, helping it along. □

Select Discography

Various Artists

Jazz in Africa Vols 1 & 2 (Kaz KAZ CD 24/KAZ CD 28)

Includes tracks by Jazz Epistles and Kippie with Pat Matshikiza

Abdullah Ibrahim

African Sun (Kaz KAZ CD 102)

Kippie plays on four tracks

Abdullah Ibrahim

Blues for A Hip King (Kaz KAZ CD 104)

Kippie plays on one track

Abdullah Ibrahim

Voice Of Africa (Kaz KAZ CD 103)

Kippie plays on three tracks

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I would like to thank Peter Esterhuysen for allowing me access to his unpublished manuscript on Kippie



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Twas ever thus. Al Green appears and disappears when you least expect it. Today he saunters in, elegant and jovially chic, the very model of a modern reverend on a whistle-stop European promotional tour. A bottle-green suit and tie, and, briefcase, a grin that leaps and bounds around the room in hot pursuit of seemingly random glances and stares, a sense of humor that obeys no common starting pistol. Something, sha la la or otherwise, makes Al Green very happy. When I ask him how he's doing, he beams instantly. "DANDY!" It's a well-chosen adjective, and the most direct answer I'll get today. Al likes his tangents.

The phrase "full circle" has been mentioned of late. In the early and mid-70s Al Green made some of the greatest soul records of all time — "Let's Stay Together," "Tired Of Being Alone" and "L-O-V-E" being the household names, the rest proving a garden of barely earthly delights. His voice was that of a swooning love hero, never too macho, never too meek, always romantic while recognising What Love Is. And then he moved back to the church, from where he'd been sent. He immersed himself in gospel music

will turn all conversation to Bible talk, given a sniff of an opening. Today, much as one might lose one of those daft quizzes where you're not allowed to answer yes or no, I make a tactical error when I mumble "good words, fine words" in response to one of his monologues. He (wiffully?) misreads this as a cue to wrap up, shake hands, stand up. I have to juggle courtesy and bull-headedness to extend the proceedings.

And yet he is a lovely man, charming and infectiously playful and buoyant. I learn that he's just recorded "Funny How Time Slips Away" with Lyle Lovett ("and his wife... what's her name, Julia... lovely girl"), that logistical problems were overcome to haul a monolithic organ downstairs into the studio during the FYC sessions for the album "because you can't do Al Green without organ", that Al gets terrible stage fright ("sometimes the band have to play the intro three times"), and that he's "gotta lotta reason to smile".

"Sometimes I mess up, I blow it, I goof off, and I really don't know what to say. I just... went off, y'know? And you have to simply say 'I'm sorry', or use

Al Green, for many the greatest voice of the age, has gone from deep soul to pure gospel and back again.

singing a love supreme

Chris Roberts asks what's love got to do with it? Photography by Jonathan Oppong-Waife.

and songs for God. 1977's exquisite *The Belle Album* expressed his notion of the indivisibility of sensual and spiritual "love". Since then it's been mainly esoteric gospel albums and weekly sermons in Memphis.

There's been the odd fleeting nod to pop concerns, but now we're being treated to a fully-fledged case of stand-up-and-be-accessible. *Don't Look Back* is a genuine and largely successful attempt to transplant the classic Al Green style into a 90s setting. Recorded with producers David Steele and Andy Cox, of Fine Young Cannibals, Arthur Baker, and Terry Manning, it's neither crass nor explorative, but full of joy. And if not all of the songs are jewels, then hey, those of us who always swore Al could make the telephone directory sound like a mischievous heavenly choir stand well and truly vindicated. It may not translate to print, but there are "oo-wee-aaa-ha-ooo"s on this record which make your bones blush.

"See, I've never been away from soul music. I've never left it," Al is saying, all hand motions and emphases of emphases. "Because soul music is directly related to gospel music. Because once, you see, I was saying, oh Lord, I don't know if I can face tomorrow. And then I'm saying, with my baby, I don't know if I can face tomorrow. See, it's really the same desire, these things. I need the aspect of the wife part and the aspect of the eternal part. Yes yes yes."

Al Green is great fun to interview, assuming you're in touch with your inner masochist. Last time I met him (1988) he wandered off for 25 minutes, then returned and carried on as if he'd never left the room. He

the other word "repent", and pick up and go on. I think everybody needs love, the whole world. Regardless of beliefs I could be an orthodox Jew, a Christian, a Moslem, anything — beliefs are beliefs. But I sing my songs and they appeal to the people who understand what those songs mean.

"Now my manager might say I can't play this, my boss might say I can't play that — our format is Top 40, Top 20, what have you. Therefore some people are saying, I love Al, and everything, and fantastic, but I can't play this, OK? So you've got to broaden me out. And when I play 'Love Is A Beautiful Thing', my manager says, 'Fantastic! Who's that?' It's my format for a wide audience, y'know what I'm saying?"

Do you enjoy singing these pop songs as much as ever?

"Yeah, I enjoy singing all of the songs. I don't call any of my children pop children or gospel children. See, I love all my kids the same. I can't call Jim my bad and Chris good, because they're all mine. I would like to correct them when they're wrong, but I wouldn't frown on one for being secular... I mean I'm secular. The Reverend Al Green is secular. He's caught up in a mortal secular body with a mind that sometimes is just like everybody else's mind, y'know? I can't say I'm so devout, I'm only kept by grace." There but for the grace of God go you? "Yeah, that's right, see. You know how it is I've been preaching the last 14 years but I'm not doing two things, I'm doing one thing. I am an artist. I paint pictures. I put a rag on a canvas and I paint. If you like the picture, fine. If you do not, I keep painting. I'm put here to tell the people one thing. We need not hate, we need not kill, destroy, steal. There's love in the world. So tell the lonely."

Entertaining as this undoubtedly is, I try bravely to move Al onto the topic of the new LP. He regales me with a long parable about Solomon, then acquiesces: "What Does It Take To Keep Me Loving You?" I wrote that out of a desperation I've done all I could do, y'know? I have a family, I have a house — there's school in the morning, somebody gotta pick up the kids, somebody gotta feed the dogs, y'know, I got a station wagon! Yeah! Like anybody else!"

Al Green is 47, has three kids, and, he informs me, two squirrels.

"So I'm saying — what does it take? I did this, I did that, y'know? By the same token, there's 'Don't Look Back.' Everybody said — ah, yeah, what a great Temptations song, blah blibble blibble bibl blah. Now you know why I sing 'Don't Look Back'? Because when they came to the mountain, and Lot saw the city and the destruction, he fled. He was given a command: flee for your lives, and don't look back! Ha! But there is no hiding place, it's gonna blow. Love will find a way."

"It's just I've come to the wisdom and knowledge that there's a little bit of God in everybody, everyday, everywhere. I might be mean as hell but in my intimate moments, in my times of quietness... Is there more in some people than in others? 'Ho ho, a lot more.'"

What if someone doesn't believe in love? What if, just suppose, someone suggested it was a myth fed to us by pop records and movies?

"Well, gee, I'm gonna first say that they haven't met the right person. Let's carry that over to the whole circle. See, Al Green sang rhythm and blues for nine years, and gospel for 14 years. He has eight Grammys and ALL of them for gospel music. Not one is for pop."

"Now, I've learned from that. From secular and from gospel. And you learn every day. There's nothing wrong with being in love. Who said that was a sin? A condemnation? Stealing a kiss on a bench in the park — what's wrong with that? People used to think it was okay. Now they've gotten so over-religious until they can't even do anything that's fun any more. It's so cut and dry, right or wrong."

"People told me I couldn't sing with Annie Lennox; she's not a Christian. I said, try to abide by the song, 'put a little love in your heart.' Unless you're a judge, you can't judge Annie Lennox. Abide by the song. Those people were tripped out! Telling you what you can't sing and what you can. I can do all the things I can!"

I still say some people don't believe in love.

"Oh, hey, keep looking, ask and seek, you'll find it. It's good to meet the right girl. The one you like the most, the one you'd drive 800 miles to see with your heart on fire, may not be the right one. You love the person that may not be the best person sometimes. It has happened to me. She ain't headed for the kitchen when you come home late at night cos you're hungry, she's headed for the kitchen to throw pots and pans! Ha!"

Have you found the right woman?

"Yeah. I'm not... lost. I just know what's good. The girl that's concerned about your health may not overwhelm you, but she may just be the most perfect person, and one day you realise what a treasure you have."

Let's say we've done the sacred and the secular. This summer Al Green played one night at the Royal Festival Hall, and although a few rather dumbly criticised it as "cabaret", most of us were moved to the heavens, and to snogging. Al reckons he was "off form", which is incredible.

"I still love singing, yeah, I mean my vocals are better now. Clearer. Last time I was over here I overdid it a little bit. I'd been singing outside in the cold in Oslo and Amsterdam, and I was hoarse. And I'd had a shot to get me through the show. I don't like to get through a show — I like to do the artistic highs and the crescendos and the flies-like-an-eagles and the turn-arounds and to do the art of it. It's about playing with a song... you sing behind and you sing in front and sometimes you oversing and you fall behind and the band wonder what in the world you're doing... hahaha!"

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PHOTO: JAC KLEIN

bourne

to be

Eugene Chadbourne is the wildman of improvised electric guitar. Ben Watson talks to him — and former Mother Of Invention Jimmy Carl Black — about The Beatles, protest songs, squeaky saxophones and country music in the world of Improv.

There's genre transgression and there are tougher assignments. Last summer, Eugene Chadbourne — associate of John Zorn, and "the undisputed master of free hilariously improvised protest metal," as Ben Thompson so precisely described him (*The Wire* 114) — toured with Jimmy Carl Black, the drummer of the original Mothers Of Invention. Welcome to the minefield of generational transgression. Why would Chadbourne, an exponent of 80s No Wave punk jazz disobedience, want to play with a veteran of the 60s rock underground? His reply takes us back to his mid-60s schooldays:

"In our gym class we had a coach who was a real fascist. He would line everyone up and shout out your name and you had to go, like, 'hyuk!' in reply. Somebody would always wait for a pause and say, 'Hi! I'm Jimmy Carl Black and I'm the Indian of the group,' and then the teacher would tear his hair out trying to figure out who said it. It rotated through the class — someone always said it."

This is a testament to the subversive weirdness of *We're Only in It For The Money*, the Zappa/Mothers album which, along with its notorious parody of the *Sgt. Pepper* cover, meshed songs into a bewildering chaos of strange sounds and off-the-wall utterances from band-members (including "Hi! I'm Jimmy Carl Black and I'm the Indian of the group").

"Money appealed to us because we were a little too young to be hippies — the hippies on the street were saying, 'Go away little kids, I can't sell you acid today.' So we liked these Zappa records because they were making fun of them. We would go up to an old hippie and go, 'Hah your hair's getting good in the back!'"

Jimmy was living in Texas. I had an opportunity to invite a bunch of people to play at the Moers Festival — I invited Jimmy and he suggested I invite Don Preston, so we wound up with a couple of the old Mothers, an inter-generational jam, y'know."

Comments Black: "It was the weirdest gig I ever played too."

Which, for a former Mother, is surely saying something. But the apparent freak-out chaos of those early Mothers records was derived, listeners would learn, from the techniques of *musique concrète*, a collage-form of music developed in post-war France. Zappa's music is highly regimented, very much the work of the "present-day composer who refuses to die", with its high-art notion of the controlling individual. The idea that you could combine teen rebellion with experimental music — and maybe tap back into the revolutionary wellsprings of the avant garde along the way — has evidently inspired Chadbourne ever since. But he comes from an altogether more egalitarian, less controlled ethic — closer in fact to the give-and-take of free improvisation. In 1990 he played at Company Week in London, his route there was strange indeed.

Chadbourne was born in 1954 and raised in Boulder, Colorado. His mother was a refugee from the Nazis (her account of the introduction of anti-Jewish regulations at her school surfaces on *I've Been Everywhere*). He was part of a generation affected by the initial Beatles explosion (Zappa, born in 1940, and Black, born in 1938, came up through the West Coast R&B scene of the 50s).

"Third or fourth grade I saw The Beatles on TV. The next day at school it was the topic. All the boys said how stupid they looked, they were ossies — but the girls were just thrilled. It was the first time I remember girls liking anything but sports, so I thought it'd be a way of getting girlfriends — I was terrible at sports. A bunch of us got guitars right away. Then there was Jimi Hendrix: sections on records where there was a lot of weird noise. Everybody started doing it."

When his family moved to Los Angeles archetypal punk rockers The Seeds played at his high school dance. As a result, his idea of free-form chaos includes a generous dollop of mid-60s garage band twang. The record industry's subsequent consolidation of the guitar boom in the 70s led to Chadbourne's disaffection with rock; he objected to audiences demanding solos that repeated the ones on records and acid-trips as a way of life. Zappa's *Weasels Ripped My Flesh* introduced him to the joys of free-jazz saxophone.

"I lost interest around Led Zeppelin. I really liked the authentic blues and I

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thought they were just doing a travesty of it. I started losing my friends, people wouldn't come over any more because [I was] listening to these old black guys, or even worse these squeaky saxophone players, that was the end of the line. When I started getting into modern jazz, my reaction to the Mothers records was, this was pretty good, but I'd rather listen to Eric Dolphy — for squeaky saxophone playing this is on a much higher level."

A remark in an Anthony Braxton review led to him checking out records by Derek Bailey. Chadbourne was pretty impressed.

"Here was a guy with a completely unique guitar style. I used to do this exercise where I would try to do imitations of Charlie Christian, Chuck Berry and Derek Bailey, back-to-back as fast as possible — just because they're such different playing styles. With Bailey's style you can really play endless variations, it's a fantastic system."

Such interests led to his hooking up in the mid-70s with John Zorn, and contact with the black avant garde in New York. Both Chadbourne and Zorn appeared on alto saxophonist Frank Lowe's *Lowe & Behold* in 1977 (also involved were Billy Bang, Jo Bower, Butch Morris and Polly Bradfield). Alienation from what rock had become persisted until the advent of punk.

"I wasn't listening to any rock, and then I read an article about The Dead Kennedys and Black Flag. It was by Robert Christgau and of course he was completely wrong and said these were Nazi groups playing Nazi music. I was intrigued — why should any bands be playing Nazi music? It seemed such an insane thing to do! Checking it out I realised it was anti-Nazi music. Reading descriptions — it had no melody, it was a bunch of noise — I thought, well finally they're getting back to playing something decent."

There was also the issue of the song. Singer-songwriters in America — Bob Dylan, Lou Reed, Joni Mitchell — traditionally arrive from literary

backgrounds. It is rare for them to be anything more than workaday guitarists. Chadbourne's fusion of art-music and protest is founded on his ability to entwine guitar specialism and song-writing. In doing so, he connects Derek Bailey's insistence on freely-improvised live performance (so often — and wrongly — considered to be arty and elitist) to America's singing-hobo tradition. It is as if the usual channels of communication have been so poisoned by the world media that only direct communication can tell the truth: song as a newspaper.

And Chadbourne is a great writer — whether the songs are political, personal or just plain crackpot. His wheedling, absurd voice resembles that used by David Thomas of Pere Ubu: rock seriousness has been co-opted by the industry, so let's get silly, folks.

Chadbourne's power trio *Shockabilly* burst on the scene in the early 80s, revamping 60s rock with violence and creative enthusiasm. Working with *Black* is not his first nod to the 60s underground, on *Vietnam* (1984) ex-Fug Ed Sanders came in on vocals. Then, horror of horrors, Chadbourne began playing country and western, the songs of America's working class.

"That was a horrible mistake in New York in the early 80s. The crowd would sit through any weird improvised music and they were always talking about incidents where, 'Well this guy came in and he freaked out listening to this stuff, he ran out with his hands over his ears, ha-ha-ha.' They reacted that way to country music. If you played a Hank Williams song they acted like you were doing something disgusting."

Impatient with free-improvisor purism, he gradually began playing entire songs at gigs, both covers and originals. *Verrain Of The Blues* (1985) is one of the great political records of the 80s, with couplets like "Dudes sitting in a milk truck, throwing bottles against a wall/God made country music for good people like y'all". The title "Johnny Cash In The Philippines" is precisely

the kind of startling juxtaposition that he likes to make, a song about US business interests in the Caribbean "Marcos's wife is a big bitch/For his death she's got the itch/Then will they still make Levi jeans?/And give blowjobs to Marcos?" (though it should be pointed out that, outside Nashville, "outlaw country" is a genuine current, country rebels Willie Nelson and David Allan Coe may have been honoured by the industry, but but country revolutionary Thore "Henki" Holm is still on the run after his involvement with the Haitian National Liberation Council's abortive revolt against Baby Doc).

Informed political awareness gives Chadbourne's transgressions a punch lacking in the work of his downtown NYC colleagues, rather than produce a stream of postmodern samples and ticky-booo drum machines he deals with the social implications of the forms he plays with. "I know people who say that if it's on a major label it's terrible, but you have to be open to everything and you do hear things that are good. Pop is at least multifaceted. Jazz always meant to me that you learned all the styles. A good jazz musician should know something about all the different styles of jazz and be able to play some of it. It's a music of tradition and of history, a music with heroes in it, and if you're going to play it you bought into that. You can't just play the music and ignore the heritage. Now it seems they just jump from the 1950s to the 1990s and nothing else happened in between. They're ignoring the history and politics of why that music happened and what it meant, and then you see these people make these disparaging comments, these guys back then 'couldn't play' — don't tell me that, they can play circles round you! I saw Stanley Crouch get decked by Sam Rivers one time, that was a great experience, Sam Rivers laid him out cold right on the stage."

Like other notable musical revolutionaries (compare Zappa or Sun Ra, and in Chadbourne's own generation, Billy Jenkins or Simon Fell), Chadbourne has found it possible to keep body and family together by eschewing big-label deals and making a cottage industry of his music. His list of available albums and videos and tapes is endless. He makes every aspect of his art — lyric, music, artwork, performances — buzz with social commentary. His latest release — *Hot Burnto #2* — is a delightful improvisation with two Viennese musicians, all cascading guitar licks and poignant post-Coxhill sax.

For subtle recognition of changes in social mores since the 60s, check this dialogue between Chadbourne and Black at their Hedden Bridge Trades Club gig. It occurred after an Appalachian version of "Mom & Dad" (from *Money*) which emphasized its aching melody-line.

EC: Have you ever been in therapy, Jim?
Heckler: He was a Mother! What more therapy do you need?
JCB: As a matter of fact I have, and you know who my doctor is? He just got his degree from the South West Texas State Teachers College in San Marcos Texas and his name is Arthur Brown [cheers] — he is a full-fledged psychologist! How would you like to be treated by the God of hellfire? A dude that lights his head on fire is gonna take care of my problems?
EC: It sounds like something out of a David Cronenberg movie. Jim.
We're gonna play one more for ya. Then you'll have to let us retire, he's an old man — he's earned his stripes, y'know. Right, Jim?
JCB: Unless some young girl wants to take me home with her — then watch out for the old man.
EC: Maybe we'd better skip the encore.
JCB: Anybody that has a Grandmother complex, come and talk to me.
EC: Jim, you come from another era — I understand that back then in those days people had sex? It's a kind of interesting idea.
Evidently all 60s reworks aren't the same



Eugene Chadbourne *Volume One: Solo Acoustic Guitar* (1975, Parachute P001)

Eugene Chadbourne *Volume Two: Solo Acoustic Guitar* (1975, Parachute P002)

Sokol/Chadbourne *Improvvised Music From Acoustic Piano & Guitar* (1977, Music Gallery Editions MGE9)

Frank Lowe Orchestra *Lowe & Behold* (1977, Musicworks 3002)

Shockability *Earth vs. Shockability* (1983, Rough Trade ROUGH 48)

Shockability *Vietnam* (1984, Fundamental SAVE1)

Eugene Chadbourne *Country Protest* (Fundamental, SAVE7)

Eugene Chadbourne with Evan Johns and The Bombs *Vermillion Of The Blues* (Fundamental, SAVE18)

Eugene Chadbourne *LSDC6W* (1979/81, Fundamental SAVE19/20)

Dr Eugene Chadbourne *I've Been Everywhere* (Fundamental SAVE68)

Eugene Chadbourne *Country Music In The World Of Islam Vol XV* (1990, Fundamental SAVE80)

Eugene Chadbourne and Evan Johns *Terror Has Some Strange Kinfolk* (1993, Alternative Tentacles VIRUS119)

Eugene Chadbourne *Songs* (1993, Intakt CD026)

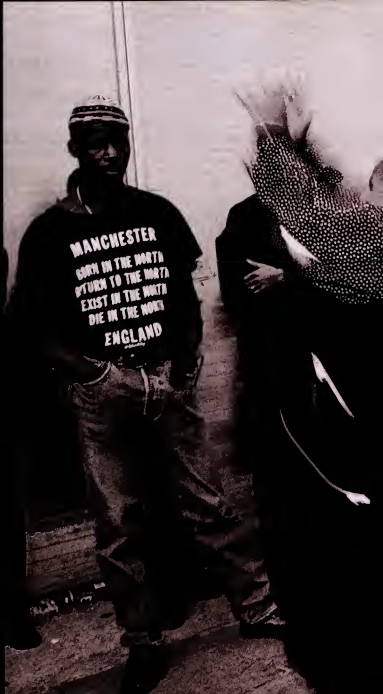
Chadbourne/Dafeldecker/Malli *Hot Burnto #2* (1993, Extraplatte EX186CD)

For an update on the endless stream of Chadbourne wonderment, write to: 707 Longview Dr., Greensboro, NC 27403-2018 USA.



Seeing Things :

Movers and shakers:
Notting Hill Carnival,
Ladbroke Grove,
August 1989.



By Ian Flanders



Wsho

jukebox

Every month we play a musician a series of records which they're asked to identify and comment on—with no prior knowledge of what they're about to hear



holger czukay

Tested by K. Martin

Born in 1938 in Danzig, Holger Czukay is a crucial link between rock and the avant garde in Europe. A former pupil of Karlheinz Stockhausen, he became bass player for the founding German rock-improv group Can in 1968. On such albums as *Monster Movie* (1968) and *Can Soundtracks* (1970), Can pioneered a method of "song writing" which owed little (beyond instrumentation) to Anglo-American rock form, depending for its structure as much on studio editing and after-the-fact treatments as it did on the original marathon improv sessions. In the early to mid-70s, they made the epochal *Togo Mago* (1971), *Ege Bamyasi* (1973) and *Soon Over Babaluma* (1974), records which were deeply influential for the more experimental and exploratory wing of the UK's new wave groups in the late 70s and early 80s. After Can folded in the late 70s, Czukay plunged into his own experiments with shortwave radio and sampling, which he'd been increasingly immersed in during the later stages of Can's career — on LPs like *Movies* (1979), he constructed music by improvising accompaniments to snippets of unknown, taped radio broadcasts, which were then rigorously edited and treated. He has been in demand as a collaborative musician ever since going solo, working with, among others, David Sylvian and Jah Wobble. His latest album, *Moving Pictures*, has just been released by Mute

KARLHEINZ STOCKHAUSEN
"Teil 2" from *Kontakte* (Sony)
[After a few seconds] Stockhausen, it's Tei!

Which members of Can studied under Stockhausen?
Irmin Schmidt and me
Why did you both choose to work in the rock field subsequently?
Because we wanted to start something new. You have to remember we began in 1968, and 68 was a new beginning for most people, we wanted to forget everything we knew. Jaki Liebezert, our drummer, said, "The only chance to create something new is if we are going to reduce ourselves to a minimum of that which we can really do." For example, play one note instead of three. I think Stockhausen is probably the last great classical composer, but the new style of composer will be very different. Classical musicians are now part of a sound museum. I know the problems Stockhausen had working with such people as a conductor. It was a horror! He always told me, "You must know these people's psychology." Do I want to be a psychologist for classical musicians? So I told him to go and play everything on his own, go and fire these people straight away. I think a new Beethoven will appear one of these days, attracted to the development of the present digital technique, he won't need to write it down.

PINK FLOYD
"Nick's Boogie" from *Tonight Let's All Make Love in London* (See For Miles)

I don't know what it is. It sounds a little bit like an unedited rehearsal by a live group.
It's from a soundtrack made in the late 60s; this song is by Pink Floyd. That's what I thought, late 60s, in fact I thought of their first album. But I couldn't recognise the track. Were they an early influence on Can?
Yes of course. But I must say I was never personally so impressed by them, although I could see they were trying something different. Did you consciously look around to see where you fitted in at that time?
Exactly, that's what we did. At that time we were very much trying to orientate ourselves. We were impressed by people who were

instigators. The Pink Floyd were one such group and The Velvet Underground another. Something like "Sister Ray" seemed very wild and spontaneous.
Had you heard Pink Floyd or The Velvet Underground prior to Can's formation?
Before the band I was working as a music teacher. The pupils would play music to me, first The Beatles, then the hip pupils would bring something like The Velvet Underground — I met Michael Karol, who was a pupil of mine and decided to start a band.
So it was then you decided to start Can?
That came when the kids asked me to join them in the school band they had formed. It went so well, I thought why not do it professionally? Then I wrote to Karol to suggest we start a band.

HERBIE HANCOCK
"Hidden Shadows" from *Sextant* (Sony Japan)

Strange rhythm. I don't know what it is, but it's live players and not sequenced. It sounds very 70s.
It's Herbie Hancock.
It's Hancock! I would never have guessed. It's a very strange complicated rhythm. It reminds me of *Aquafall* by Jethro Tull, they had completely crazy rhythms like this. What were hearing would have fitted perfectly in to the German rock of the early 70s.
It's a group comprising Miles Davis acolytes from the late 60s/early 70s. Was that period of Miles an influence on Can?
Very much, *Blotch Brew* was a very big influence. That was when jazz became interesting and calculable. It became a thing where you could say yes or no, instead of becoming so free that you don't know what yes or no is. It became electric. Were you aware of a free jazz movement at that time?
Yes I was aware, but Jaki Liebezert was actually a free jazz drummer, playing with a famous group led by Manfred Schoof. Then he felt it became too free, it was while playing in a modern jazz opera with four other drummers, he noticed that he could play what he wanted and the conductor wouldn't notice it or declare it right or wrong. Jaki wanted simplicity and to be able to

tell right from wrong. So he said goodbye to that scene.

ENNO MORRICONE

"Munamity Pt 2" from *The Thing S/T* (Varese Sarabande)

It could be a track from a tragic sci-fi soundtrack.

Close: Do you have any idea which movie?

No I only guessed by the sound of the piece.

It's Morricone's soundtrack for John Carpenter's version of *The Thing* (Morricone!) I would never have guessed it was him. You know I met him at a film festival. I was giving a lecture to the musicians attending, on how to make music that would lead to their own unemployment. I told them that the diatribe was of far more worth than all the experts on trumpets and violins. I saw Morricone in the audience and he was sitting there looking completely bored, thinking to himself 'what a hopeless case I was. Then I illustrated what I meant by playing them a recording of my music and accompanying video. I didn't see him again for a year. Then the day before Sergio Leone's funeral, I met him again and we went for a meal together. It was there that he said to me, 'When I saw you at that film festival, originally I thought you were completely nuts. I couldn't take you seriously at all. What you said sounded like complete nonsense. But then I heard the music and saw the video and thought this man is even right.'

BRAINTICKET

"Branticket Pt 1" from *Branticket* (Bellaphon)

It sounds great. So far it sounds like the most modern song you've played me.

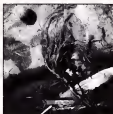
It's one of the oldest, it's from an obscure German band, released in 1971.

It's fantastic, I've never heard it before.

They're called Branticket. It reminds me of a 70s funk/musique concrète crossover.

Yes it is something like that. I had to wonder if it was a sample montage or some sort of jazzrock mutation. But it was neither thankfully. The mix is very good with the organ so high in the mix. It could easily be a very early Phil Spector

production. Spector's selection process, pushing the best instrument to drive a song, is fantastic. This is the way I choose to work now but obviously with a lot more editing involved, thousands of edits that you can't even hear. I no longer even use multitrack. I have a digital editing system.



DAVID SYLVIAN

"Maria" from *Secrets Of The Beehive* (Virgin)

Yes of course this is obvious, not just from the voice but the music as well.

Are you very fond of Sylvian's music?

Yes, especially this album. I also really enjoy working with him. David is one of my favourite vocalists and musicians, particularly for making decisions on what sounds have to be used. He has great taste. He is a man who originates from the first sound onwards, in order to envelop the whole song.

Do you identify with his vision?

Yes, very much, he is one of the greatest Ambient musicians. This track is a piece of music I can always listen to. *Had you met Jon Hassell before sharing a recording date on Sylvian's Brilliant Trees?* We had both studied under Stockhausen, we became friends during that time. He, like myself, stepped out of the classical field and founded a strong identity since that decision. He also influenced me a lot as regards alien sounds and his method of playing an instrument, the idea of something requiring so little effort having so much effect.

AFM

"Allantus Giandulosa" from *AFM Music 1966* (Matchless Recordings)

A group of transit passengers passing by and then disappearing again. It could be a very early Can piece, we have done a lot of this type of chaotic recording, as well as live performances which incorporated this kind of technique. That was the principle of Can, you could say. To form a structure and then end up with chaos, and from that chaos start up again.

This is AFM from 1966. They're a group of British improvisers, whose core is still working today.

This is, as regards our live recordings, one of the closest relatives I've heard to Can. Public Image of course were somehow influenced too, but this could easily be an old recording of Can. It's very, very interesting.

Keith Rowe, the guitarist, has also been a keen advocate of the abuse of short wave radio.

The amount of chaos is very strongly related to free jazz but much more refreshing.

PUBLIC IMAGE LIMITED

"Socialist" from *Metal Box* (Virgin)

It could be Neu. Certainly it's played live and very monotonous. Very cheap pure electronics on top, it could be an earlier influence on Techno, due to the monitory and bustling electronics. No restraints. Pure sound impact. *You've worked with one member of this band before.*

Is it This Heat?

No, it's Public Image Ltd with Jah Wobble, from *Metal Box*. That is very unusual for PIL, I mean it's instrumental. Jah Wobble told me about their recording sessions. He said they were a real adventure. They used similar techniques to Can's. They would play until they located and keep the mysterious parts, playing so long until you've got a track that retains a secret. They were one of my favourite bands, especially because of Wobble. I even liked *Flowers Of Romance*, although he had left the band by then. Jah was especially fond of *Flowers*, because rhythmically it had been so reduced. This was where I find the power of their music and the quality. Now of course they are very uninteresting. *You made Full Circle with Wobble in 1980. How did that come about?*

It's one of my favourite albums. We met through a mutual friend who had been working for NME. He set up a meeting and Wobble just drank beer after beer, which I didn't like very much. Then suddenly he stopped drinking and then I started to find him quite fascinating. Wobble then booked a very small studio in Soho, and we finished the recordings in about three hours, obviously excluding the editing and mixing. **So Jah Wobble was a fan of Con?** Yes, he and the others in PIL liked Can and demonstrated this by playing a 20 minute piece on Capital Radio to accompany an interview.



BRIAN ENO/DAVID BYRNE

"A Secret Life" from *My Life In The Bush Of Ghosts* (Editions EG)

Is it My Life In The Bush Of Ghosts? Yes, it's 'A Secret Life'. How did you end up meeting Eno?

He was touring with Roxy Music and I went backstage and introduced myself. Later I played on two recording sessions with him. I played on *Music For Airports* but he didn't use the bassline in the end. He was right not to. *When I heard Canibus, which you recorded in 1968, I couldn't help thinking how influential it had been in terms of the ethnic sampling you indulged in. Do you think it influenced an album like Bush Of Ghosts?*

I spoke to Eno and he told me he was influenced more by my album *Movements*. Of course he made something different from ethnic samples, so he didn't copy me.

Do you feel guilty about the potentially exploitative aspects of sampling African tribes?

No, not at all. When Reebop (Kwaku Baah, percussionist on

Can's *Sow Delight*, ex-Hendrix, Stones and Traffic sessioner) came into Can with Rosko Gee, I had the radio set up and was listening out for possible signals from all over the world, the group was not fond of this idea, they wanted to become proper musicians. During a concert in Berlin, Reebop beat me up, because he felt I was stealing musicians' souls. I can assure you, other people may want to steal their souls, but not me. I wanted to create a new living being out of these sounds. The rest of the group remained passive while he hit me in the face. Then they unplugged me on stage. That was the end of Can. It was 1976 or 77.

CHEB KHALED

"Sidi Boumediene" from *Rai Rebels* (Earthworks)

Could it be one of the Afro/French things from Paris? It's a Rai recording by Cheb Khaled. That is the type of music I meant. To tell you the truth, when I heard Rai in the beginning I had thought to myself, if they had kept the music as natural as it once was it would have been much better than adding pop samples. The sampler on this recording sounds like shit. That these people are finding a new way of expressing themselves is fine by me. I find that positive. What I think is a horror, is the thought or reality of 'cheap international' as I call it. Feeling at home in a hotel in Tokyo or London because they both look the same. Do you think you can be accused of playing a part in introducing that kind of transglobal blandness, with a recording like Canais? Yes, this is possible and could be an argument against my whole style of production. I have done that and played a part in starting it perhaps. But whether it was a good or bad idea only time will tell.

LEE PERRY

"Roast Fish & Cornbread" from *The Upsetter Presents Roast Fish & Cornbread* (VP Records)

Is that Lee Perry? Yes, from the *Black Ark* period. He is one of my greatest heroes — Brian Eno introduced me to Lee Perry's music. I think it was in 1973 or 75, at the Notting Hill

Carnival. Reggae was completely new and exotic to me. The fact that they were playing so slow was something which fascinated me. Lee Perry felt like a brother to me in terms of musical relationships.



THE ORB

"Little Fluffy Clouds" from *Adventures Beyond The Ultraworld* (Big Life)

I like it, I normally hate sequencers but when I hear this I suddenly like them. It sounds like very strange House music. The great thing about this type of music is the way it is mixed and constructed. Pushing the bass drum right, suddenly concentrating on high and low ranges, leaving holes in the middle. I like this very much.

It's *The Orb*. They have been very influential in the UK Ambient dance phenomenon.

The continuous voice, floating in the air on this piece as if nothing else is needed to exist, is just so good.

Do you approve of Ambient's new guise?

It's a very positive thing. If somebody came up to me and said everything has been done in music, nothing is new and everything is getting poorer and poorer, I would point out something like this track. It just sounds so fresh. It is much more interesting to make an uninteresting album than an interesting one. When you are trying to create too much of interest, you can easily bore people with too much info or intention. To be intentionally interesting — that is something I hate.

MAIN

"Flametracer" from *Hydra-Calm* (Beggars Banquet)

In the beginning I sounded like it was an updated version of Can. The

voice is unclear and somehow the song is trying to remain the same, but for remaining the same there is too much incident in it and too much dramatic expectation being built up. With such a grand introduction, such a panorama of heaviness, it should lead to something else happening. It's a newish UK band called Man. Yes I have heard them before. We share a distributor in Germany and they sent me their latest CD. I didn't like it to tell you the truth because it was lacking in rhythm. It was not magical. Do you hear a connection between this and Can?

Yes in the sinisterism. Can was at its best when it was sinister. Why do you think Can's influence is still so strong today? Because Can had a reduction method, a minimalism that is still of interest today. I am prouder to make music for other musicians than the general public. It is a cheap hero who the consumers adore.

KRAFTWERK

"Ruckzuck" from *Kraftwerk* (Philips)

Laune Anderson?

No, European.

It's one of Kraftwerk's first pieces. This song became very successful, it's now used as a theme tune for a TV news magazine.

At the time of this record they visited Can's studio nearly every second or third day. I respect them very much for what they have done because what they create is a type of mood picture.

"Autobahn", with its simple idea, gives such a strong identity. The bad side for me is that they are too clean and robotic now.

Do you feel that Can was part of some overall German movement or scene?

In a way, yet the feeling of wanting independence, especially from other groups, was dominant. It was a happy time, when everyone wanted to be unified, then the experience of what that actually meant — you do the work and I take the benefits. So very quickly we decided not to be too brotherly. I remember Jah Wobble told me that the punks had blown the hip-

pies out. He told me a story, that he was on a bus and the bus was about to leave, when a hippy tried to jump on, only to be told by a punk, 'Not you, hippy!' He then kicked him off the bus. Me. I thought, coming from the hippy time, have they deserved it? And there are enough reasons to say, yes, they deserved such treatment. Were you interested in Faust's experiments?

Faust seemed innovative to me, but to tell you the truth we didn't respect them very much. It seemed to us that they would be a one day wonder and it happened exactly like that. Can at least developed. How do you view bands like them and *The Velvet Underground* now that they have reformed? Actually it's fine, musically it may not be such a good decision. I can understand Maureen Tucker wanting a new flat for her and her family.

What were the reasons for Can's reformation?

Because Malcolm Mooney (Can's first singer) suddenly wrote me a letter saying he would like to sing again, having only been working with sculpture. With the others I said it would have to be innovative in some way for it to be worthwhile. So it was a musical decision and not an economical choice.

Yes, we got together for a test recording and it took me a week to decide to try again. The recording sessions lasted for three weeks and were very good. But then of course came the 95 per cent workload, with the mixing and editing. At the end the members of Can felt very differently about the results. It wasn't a bad album but I had to fight for "In The Distance Lies The Future", the best track, to be included on the final CD.

Why?

Only God knows.

Will there be any further Can recordings?

I'm not so sure. I think that the time is over. I personally don't want to blame anyone but suddenly I felt surrounded by old people. I'm far more attracted to young people's ideas at the moment. □

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Dennis "Blackbeard" Bovell has been one of the UK's leading dub producers since the mid-70s. Will Montgomery recalls his forgotten 1977 masterpiece *Strictly Dub Wize*.



Today the spaces dub opened up are everywhere — from the metal spurge of Blind Idiot God and their followers to the icy terrain of the Ambient dance scene. Dub has insinuated itself into everyday listening. Once version music, a music of B-sides and alternate takes, it also remains a parasitic presence in the bowels of other musics. Oddly, its mysterious, indeterminate touch has prospered long after the demise of the dub album proper.

Initially released on Temous in 1977, the label for whom Dennis "Blackbeard" Bovell had produced Steel Pulse's first single "Bun Dem", *Strictly Dub Wize* stands as one of the finest of all UK dub albums. Though quickly picked up by United Artists and released as part of their Reggae File series on Balistic, it soon vanished without trace into the gaping maw of British dub mythology.

Working with permutations of the Matumbi line up (the band were about to produce their most highly-wrought work, *Seven Seals*) Bovell had previously masterminded releases like the *Ah Who Sen?* Go Deh! set on the Ramla label, a laid-back, lo-fi take on the prevalent JA style (as exemplified by the productions of Augustus Pablo, Keith Hudson, etc.) *Strictly Dub Wize* was a thing apart. With access to a decent West End studio, Bovell was able to confect a half-hour series of winsome

sonic essays that was the equal of the best of the imported JA product. Moreover, the sheer intoxicating elasticity of the music set it apart from the occasionally over-musicianship work of other British reggae bands of the time (eg Steel Pulse, Misty In Roots, Aswad, etc).

What made the set different was its mixture of exuberance and a curious restraint which held it back from drum'n'bass monomania. Comparing it to an imported contemporary in the reggae charts like Joe Gibbs's *Mystic Dub*, the bass sound is fatter, the percussion brighter and there's a thoroughly individual heavily-reverbed snare drum sound. Bass and keyboards vie in picking out unusually strong melody lines. A dreamy, Lee Scratch Perry ambience prevails in favour of the stripped-down thunder of a Sly'n'Robbie style rhythm track (*Blackbeard's* 1980 album *I Wah Dub* bears the legend "THIS RECORD IS SCRATCHED" and an aurally-punning run-out groove plays the sound of maltreated vinyl). Humour is there in tracks like "Ska-Be-Do-Za", which is pure play and surely the wisest treatment ever given to "Surrey With The Fringe On Top". Thankfully, there's none of the electronic gimcrackery that was to overtake and pollute the dub scene, in the shape of Mikey Dread or *Mad Professor Meets The Space Invaders*.

Along with the abundance of melody, there's an openness to Bovell's bass playing which is testament to the breadth of his listening — Stanley Clarke, Jack Bruce and Jaco Pastorius were all much admired by him at the time. There are moments on cuts like "Ites Of Dub" and "Strictly Dub" when the percussion comes on like a duststorm, taking to clattering extremes the upfront sound that King Tubby had pioneered earlier in the 70s. It's perhaps the most striking aspect of the album. When I talked to him about it recently, Bovell told me he was interested in the feel Bob Marley's percussionist Scully would have created if he could have flown him over and then told him what to do!

Other choice moments include the sleazy melody of "Cut After Cut", "Rebel Chase" s zingy piano and organ interplay, the swathes of reverb and righteous hi-hat of "River To Bank Rocking", the unhinged early synth of "Mint Ah Music" and "Tell Yuh So", the gorgeous drop outs and unexpected bass shifts of "Ah Weh".

Following this album, British dub subsequently went in directions as different as the deep roots sound of Jah Shaka and, following Bovell's experimental team-up with The Silts and (especially) The Pop Group, the experimental cut-ups of Adrian Sherwood. None of this has really followed the sly swagger of *Strictly Dub Wize*. The scene here has even seemed to cultivate its recondite, underground status (think of the cultishness of On-U). After the interesting synth work on *I Wah Dub* and the more commercial Union Kwest Johnson dub poetry albums (he writes UKJ's arrangements), Bovell's solo work has tended to be in a pop-reggae vein that hasn't matched the artistry of the earlier work — though as one of the pioneer producers of *Lovers Rock* ("Silly Games", for example), he obviously always had a fondness for pop. During the early 80s, he also produced the underrated later material of wry popsters Orange Juice. Sadly, his Dub Band have rarely played live in this country.

Strictly Dub Wize is, of course, just one among many representatives of the dub genre, but a superbly good-humoured one that simply refuses to limit itself to po-faced, bass-heavy banalities. □

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reel to reel

CB4 opens with the camera panning slowly over the sleeves of early, seminal HipHop records like Curtis Blow's "The Breaks" and The Sugarhill Gang's "Rappers Delight", before cutting to a record company's offices where sit CB4, the latest gangsta rap sensation, exuding attitude like the street kids they're meant to be. The inference seems to be, how did we get from the "innocence" of the old school to today's (manufactured?) rap products? It's one of the few moments in the film where we're given the chance to think about the consequences of the direction much West Coast rap has taken in recent years. Although CB4 is an example of that most ephemeral of film genres, the spoof, for most of the movie director Tamra Davis whips the thin story along at a pace that precludes anything but the most cursory and obvious swipes at the rap industry, which is probably not a bad idea, had she left too much time for the audience to think they might have realised how flimsy the whole project is.

The film's premise is promising enough. CB4 (it stands for Cell Block Four) are the subjects of a "rapumentary", designed to add weight and substance to their reputation as original gangsters. In fact, what it reveals is that the three rappers are middle class kids who've adopted the guise of ghetto gangsters to facilitate their chances of getting a record deal. Dressing exclusively in prison garb and taking their name from the jail they supposedly met in, their theme tune "Straight Out Of L.A." (a laboured and too often repeated take-off of NWA's "Straight Outta Compton") has propelled them to the top of the rap charts. Now the role models for countless kids, they attract the attention of an unscrupulous politician out to boost his public profile, before realising

In this month's Reel To Reel, reviews of HipHop on the big screen, and Sun Ra on video.

the error of their ways and reverting to their original personalities.

While their onstage antics lampoon the extreme sexism of 2 Live Crew, and there's some easy humour at the expense of money-grabbing record company execs, this can't be called satire because it's too loose and incoherent (just about the only critique of current HipHop trends that emerges is that referring to women as "bitches and hos" is wrong). There are a few sharp lines I liked: the description of music journalists as "groupies with pens" and the idea of a HipHop retirement home catering for senile rappers has a certain charm. But the real problem with the film is that you can't parody a parody, though the cameo appearances of Ice T and Ice Cube suggest that you can give it a go.

As is standard for most HipHop movies, the soundtrack emerged before the film's release and it's hard to fault KRS-One, Public Enemy and the Fu-Schickens, even if the tunes they contribute aren't their best. The avowed intention of the filmmakers, and they include black pop culture guru Nelson George, was to produce the definitive rap movie. They haven't, and the most effective cinematic representations of the HipHop ethos remain films like *Straight Out Of Brooklyn* and *Juice*, where the music is an adjunct to the narrative rather than the reason for it.

DAVID EIMER

Robert Mugge's 1980 film *A Joyful Noise* was hailed as the definitive Sun Ra biopic. But director John Coney's obscure 1974 film *Space Is The Place* achieves the seemingly impossible by eclipsing even that freakish spectacle. The film's rare live footage of the Arkestra doesn't match that of Mugge's film, but this 63 minute psychedelic parable,

combining Blaxploitation farce, B-movie Sci-Fi and conspiracy thriller, wins out by simply outwearing its predecessor.

The film's central narrative features Ra the alien pharaoh challenging Ray Johnson's super smooth pimp overlord at cards, with the destiny of the Black race as the stake. Sub-plot interests include singer June Tyson delivering cosmic one-liners from behind bug-eyed pear-drop shades, the coffin-delying resurrection of tenor player John Gilmore, and the kidnap and interrogation of Ra himself, the result is an early 70s treasure trove of kitsch and surreal kinetics that brilliantly reinforces the bandleader's bizarre legacy.

Intriguingly, considering the film's fictional approach, it's here that Ra makes his most overtly political statements (albeit while wearing platform boots). Recent critical opinion has it that ever since Ra's early 50s Chicago days his work has had parallels with the separatist ideologies of Afrocentrism and Black Nationalism. But this 1974 movie, with its token whites depicted as undercover cops, parasitic spies or confounded onlookers, appears to be fuelled by an absolute frustration with the human race, white and black (as Ra told Graham Lock in 1990, "I'm alone on this planet"). Its critical view of Black America sowing the seeds of its own destruction in the face of racist adversity lends a new dimension to the work of an artist too easily despatched to the realms of the fantastic. *Space Is The Place* is a suitably dense, posthumous time/less capsule.

K. MARTIN

CB4 goes on general cinema release this month. *Space Is The Place* is available on video through K. Jazz (KJ123); distributed by Cadillac.



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Soundcheck

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Butterfly Child, De La Soul, Rickie Lee Jones, Stockhausen

In Soundcheck:

Louis Armstrong, Big Star, George Clinton, Robert Cray, The Ex, David Murray, Morton Feldman, JJ Johnson, One Dove, Elvis, Prince, Cecil and more

In Brief:

Kodwo Eshun reviews the new dance releases

In Outline:

Richard Scott comes out of West Africa



A Butterfly Child

WIRE WINNER:

rapture attack

Butterfly Child

Onomatopoeia

ROUGH TRADE R3082 CD/LP

Belfast quartet Butterfly Child celebrate the moment when rapture turns language into delicious gales of laughter. Or at least, they graze my idea of pop nirvana: twin overdriven guitars condensed through hot valves, a drummer with an evident free bop history, fractal vid-bites and treated

Super-8 that's never intrusive, strategically-placed incense-cones. They mean to seduce your every sense, not with volume for its own sake but rather through an obsession with groove, the way the music moves and soars. Their studio work is more of a solo project by leader Joe Cassidy: each of these 12 songs is a reverb-free, crisp frosting of strummed acoustic guitars, juddering, phased sequencers and the kind of flickering, nimble-drum programming beloved of lamented BC mentors AR Kane. The songs

are a dream-diary scribbled during the blue hour of consciousness, the inspired seconds of mental *éclat* upon waking before the demands of the material world reduce and obliterate the boundaries of our insight.

Cassidy's high-pitched, nasal voice (un-sarcastic Barney Sumner, agendaless Ray Davies) funambulates in and out of the latticework of guitar inventions. It's enlivened with rapture, so strung-out it's barely resourceful enough to push out any kind of verbal response. In the joy-filled push-and-pull of Cassidy's often incoherent automatic verse, I sense a fall from grace with language that's been ecstatically tempered by these Elysian encounters with the revivifying power of the Lync. Don't talk — laugh. It's lightyears away from the kind of naïf regression spearheaded by Cranes or Pram titles like "Onomatopoeia", "Young Virgins Call For Mubiny" or "Xcelusius" are far from innocent or untutored. To judge by the sumptuous cover (an ornate marriage of Titian and Spraycan), there are a host of unexplored obsessions this band have yet to work out. Pop album of the year — welcome the Newest Romantics.

ROB YOUNG

WIRE WINNER:

altered states

De La Soul

Buhloone Mindstate

BIG LIFE BIRD 25 CD/MC/LP

Four years ago, with their debut album *Three Feet High And Rising*, De La Soul supposedly broke free from HipHop's supposedly restricted code of sampling, subject and identity. But in fact they actualised and extended HipHop's meta-status as a music made from other musics, as much as they departed from it.

In a McLuhanite sense, HipHop is post-pop music; it views all music

as old content for its new form, regarding it with the cold-eyed glance of a 21st-century imperialist. Hip-hop has disregarding, deforming hands, the fingers of the collageist and the mind of a Frankensteinian manipulator. It is both a constructor of tradition and a wrecker of heritage, a betrayer of memory and a reanimator of history. Nostalgic critics (and fans even more) tend to fix Hip-hop as the cyborgian reconstructor of an undimmed 'aural tradition', as the vigilant transmitter of radical messages. You could just as easily view it as an amoral and indifferent coloniser of the global sound archive, mining all musics for their commodity status instead of their aesthetic value. From this view, Hip-hop is a joyful carnage, a heedless misuser. Take the traditional line as a Father and the iconoclastic line as a Mother (or vice versa) and De La Soul, it becomes clear, are the wealthy, lazy, gifted children of Hip-hop: neither imperialists nor bankers, but rather slackers; Afri-nauts tuned in to the frequencies of what they once called the inner sound, now dropping out and into what they're here calling a *Buhloone Mindstate*.

Their journey inwards is simultaneously an expansion outwards. Proclaiming themselves brothers from another planet or, more precisely, others from a brother planet, they quoted Elizabethan English, cited Johnny Cash, heralded Serge Gainsbourg as their mentor. Freed up by this quizzical Hamman stance, it's not hard to see their second album *De La Soul Is Dead* as a bitter renunciation of such flagrancy. Their music was excessive and inadequate, impulsive and emphatic, and it provoked all kinds of imitations in all kinds of people.

De La Soul Is Dead was them killing off all of themselves, committing the multisubstance of "Me, Myself And I", as a response to the death-by-imitation which had been visited on them. Because *De La Soul* are several, and most of them seemingly whimsical, they have selves to spare and their third LP finds them still unable to be themselves, still not cohering or adding up to any one identity. "I Am

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I Be' makes music out of their dangerous realism, their serious asynchronicity. It loops the voice of their new female MC Shorty into a *mélange* before enveloping itself in a languorous hornstream which picks up from Maceo Parker's guest appearance on "I Be Blowing". They are as inscrutable, as hermetic as they ever were. What or who is the "Path Dooke" Guru refers to? And the seriousness of Maceo's demand to "mess up my mind, mess up my mind with the eyepatch" emphasises rather than alleviates the delicious sense of listening in on a private not-quite-joke. At the end of the three maddening nonsequiturs they call skits, and the 12 tracks of this mournful and startling album, Posnious declares, "Fuck being hard, Posnious is complicated". As if we ever thought otherwise.

KODWO ESHU

WIREWINNER:

fallen angel

Rickie Lee Jones

Traffic From Paradise

GEFFEN 6824602 CD/IMP LP

Rickie Lee Jones continues on her own singular way, making records which will not reap her the Four Non Blondes audience, will not return her to the giddy orbit which has her reward for the one-off hit "Chuck E's In Love". That was more than ten years ago, and there has been a lot of symbolic water between the rocks since. Not surprisingly, a lot of her records deal with being caught in time, and also with reclaiming all the bits of the mosaic of personality which get lost in the caricature-making process of fame or infamy. Her subsequent work has been patchy, but for the right reasons. It doesn't suit the immediate-hit economy because her records often take months or years to make sense. *Flying Cowboys* — with its burnished AOR production by Walter Becker — seemed initially disappointing, but repeated excursions (exposed a work which may be her crowning glory thus far, a beautifully sustained and redemptive work.

Traffic From Paradise follows suit.

It won't win many new converts — although its acoustic lassitudes, and hermetic lyrical syntax ought to appeal to an *Unplugged*-suckered and R&B-worshipping world. The first thing you notice after the alternately gnarly/lush semi-acoustic production (by RLJ herself) are the numerous whispers of religious inquiry. There is hardly a song that does not make mention of angels or heaven, and in "Running From Mercy", we get a full-blown RLJ hymn. But, this being RLJ, the priest has to hand-on, her angels "wash their wings in the dirt" and end up stranded in Las Vegas bars ("Look at them — *pokey like flightless birds* ...").

Following her track record of unlikely covers there is a ferociously hip self-deconstruct of Bowe's "Rebel Rebel", of all things. Even this becomes read back into a backwash of amused regret at the reprobate she used to be ("You know fans — they want more and they want it coarse. You've torn your dress/Your face is a mess"), rounded out with mature self-acceptance ("How could they know, what you wanna do? Hot tramp, I love you so").

The wash of grimy acoustic guitar, barbed synthesiser and mumbled prayer means that her Acoustic is nearer vintage chymenical John Martyn than unwired Clapton. The fact that there is no lyric sheet only compounds the impression of her voice used as one more instrument, like a wash of flowery crimson over a Georgina O'Keefe bonescape. If there's a caveat it's that she doesn't let this stoned, immaculate voice fly fully free often enough, but when she does (the aching arching chorus of "Pink Flamingoes", the conclusion of the Blue Nile-ish "Tigers") it's almost unnaturally affecting.

The RLJ take on things is so low key, it's only afterwards you realise she's been needing away at a kind of Blakean vision of redemption, of angels on abandoned planes, and the Soul realigned in dusty places. Tender as betrayal, lescivous, wounded, Samaritan, she's a kaleidoscopic contradiction: one of the last genuine voices in rock who isn't also a bore.

IAN PENNIN



WINNER:

chance meeting

Karlheinz Stockhausen

Klavierstücke I-XI/Mikrophonie II

SONY CLASSICAL S2K 53346 2CD

During a phone-in following the broadcast of a performance of *Ylem* on BBC2 in 1972, Stockhausen was asked why he took credit as composer of works in which the performers were given so much discretion. But in a sense he doesn't, regarding himself more as a channel for the music rather than its inventor. He does, however, impose some pretty specific guidelines on 'chance'. Performers are given strict directions, though these are not always objectively measurable. In *Mikrophonie II*, for example, the instruction to sing 'à la jazz', 'like an affected snob' or 'desperately anxious' will mean different things, provoke different sounds, from different performers.

The earliest of these works to incorporate variable factors outside the control of composer or musician is *Klavierstück VI*. The first cycle of piano pieces, numbers I-IV were written in 1952-3 when Stockhausen was in Paris studying with Messiaen. This was before the pivotal *Kontro-Punkte* (also written in 53) and still during Stockhausen's ascetic serialist phases, although he was beginning to develop, as he expressed it, from 'selective' or 'point' music to 'group composition'. I-IV are austere miniatures, well within the parameters of the Second Viennese School of composers (Schoenberg, Webern, Berg). V, part of the second cycle begun in 1954, uses a similar language but VI, as well as entering a different timescale (it's some 25 minutes long) moves on to different concepts. The autonomous life of sounds — their periods of decay and reverberation — determines the temporal structure of the piece. By *Klavierstück XI* (1956) he was allowing the pianist to shape the piece, the score consisting of 19 irregularly distributed groups of notes which the performer plays randomly within certain parameters. Yet, as I indicated earlier, Stockhausen always seeks to reserve some control: the pianist

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

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decides which order to play the groups, but the score contains instructions in each group which affect the way that the next group, whatever it might be, is realised. IX and X did not reach a form which Stockhausen was satisfied with until 1981. Their intended first performance at Darmstadt was aborted, and in fact the concert nearly failed to get as far as VIII in the face of undisguised mirth from the audience. Only an intervention from composer Luigi Nono allowed the pianist, Marcelle Mercier, to complete the recital. As ever, we can be smug with hindsight, recognising this collection as essential chapters in the literature of the piano. The performer on these resissued 1965 CBS recordings is Stockhausen's friend and frequent collaborator, Aloys Kontarsky.

Traditionally, electronic music had been created in the studio through long and painstaking sessions grappling with primitive technology. In the two *Mikrophonie* pieces the music was created in real time, in the presence of the audience, who could witness the simultaneous production and transmutation of sound. The processes of transformation became part of the music and part of the performance. In *Mikrophonie I* two tam-tams are agitated by one group of musicians, while a second group monitors the results through hand-held microphones and a third modifies the sounds with filters and potentiometers (ie volume knobs — Ed.). *Mikrophonie II* uses similar procedures, but with a choir as the sound generator.

Throughout this period Stockhausen's muse struggled with the challenge of 'mediating between organisation and non-organisation', order and potential chaos. A bit like life really. The mechanics and surface characteristics of the *Mikrophonie* pieces may seem quaint to 90s ears, but Stockhausen's philosophic and artistic concerns remain pertinent, and his enthralling sound worlds still merit serious attention.

BARRY WITHERDEN

soundcheck

Louis Armstrong

Great Original Performances

1923-1931

CDS CBS MPCD618 CD

Louis Armstrong

The Complete Decca Recordings Of Louis Armstrong And The All Stars

MOSAC MD6-146 6CD

Two clear phases of Armstrong's career are given major coverage with these records: Robert Parker's latest remasterings (formerly for the BBC, now for the indie CDS) have him returning to the peerless Hot Sevens and later Hot Fives, while the Mosac CDs examine the oft-maligned All Stars sessions of the 50s. Listening to one set after the other makes it clear how wrong-headed much criticism of Armstrong has been. The daredevil improviser of the 20s didn't go into a tailspin: there is astonishing power and depth in the later records, even though they're completely different in tone and temperament.

Jazz still has few more enthralling moments than those on 'Wild Man Blues' or 'Muggles', and Parker's obsessively scrupulous mastering makes them sound cleaner and wider than these old records ever have, even though you still need to get used to his idea of what the soundstage should be like. In this context, Louis is mercurial, a born risk-taker, a man inventing the jazz solo. By the time of the first All Stars date, he was the grand old man, with nothing left to prove. Filling in the gap between the two are what may be his greatest achievements on record, his most flawless and noble efforts, the big band sides of the early 30s. Yet several of the All Stars dates remakes some of those successes without diminishing his greatness. The new versions of 'If I Could Be With You' and 'I Can't Give You Anything But Love' are extraordinarily moving.

As the great Dan Morgenstern points out in his notes, the overwhelming thing about later Armstrong is his sound. Having set down all those pyrotechnics at the

outset, Louis made melodies and theme statements into extensions of himself, the majesty of his delivery as transforming as anything by Davis or Webster or the other minimalist masters. The CDS collection is as strong an introduction as any to music that should be in every jazz collection. But the six Mosaic CDs, stunningly engineered from master tapes, are a more welcome reminder that nobody sounded like Pops.

RICHARD COOK

Bad Brains

Rise
BPC EPIC474265 CD/HC

Electric World

Life+Love
MUSWORKS MUW1014 CD

Ominous when a radical rock band change singer and drummer and sign to a major. Add rumors that their sound has gone "corporate" and you fear the worst. But Rise is not dross. Bad Brains maintain their preeminence among attempts to resurrect the political and artistic legacy of Hendrix (Lenny Kravitz, Red Hot Chili Peppers, Rage Against The Machine, etc). Singer Israel Joseph dropped for Living Colour's HR back in 1983 with *Rock For Light*; he and drummer Mackie are into the spirit of the thing. The band are still a juicy, swinging rock.

"Hair" and "Take Your Time" suffer from Living Colour-style condescension: attempts to "communicate" with the US youth-market. However, ability to combine prodigious musical technique with outness makes the music special. Dr Know's guitar solos are models of how to combine Steve Vai chops with genuine risk. Being played by Americans, the reggae is of course weird and weak, but the aspects Bad Brains stress — suffering and militancy — are the true key (something Sting never understood). Lumbered with a crap love song ("Without You"), Rise is flawed but likeable, beginners, though, would do better to check the astonishing back catalogue.

Electric World consist of singer-guitarist John King (not the Gang Of Four singer), keyboardist Bernie

Worrell (ex-Parliament), bassist Amin Ali (ex-Blood Ullmer) and drummer Abe Speller (ex-Sonny Sharrock). Sadly, uninspired songwriting and poor vocals cannot be saved by expert funk backings and Doors organ. The eight minute instrumental "Flash" shows these cats can play a gem of groovacious, chaotic funk. Ali in fine slap mode. The Blue Humans meet Dave "Baby" Cortez. It's nice to know people are dusting off their Cream albums (progressive rock guitar by the yard), but Electric World are tainted by calculation, a too-easy emulation of other people's best moments. Tacky cover, too.

BEN WATSON

Big Star

Columbia Live at Missouri University 4/25/93
ZOO 72445 11060 CD/HC

Twenty six years ago in Memphis, Bell Records started churning out bubblegum hits, not the least probable of which were by a group featuring a cherubic 16-year-old with the gravel voice of a middle aged blues man. Three years and three huge hits (in the shape of "The Letter", "Soul Deep" and "Cry Like a Baby") later and Alex Chilton was on his way, frustrated by his inability to spice up the sugar of Box Tops albums with his own vinegar-tinged work. Back in Memphis, Chilton married his lyrical intensity to the melodic power of existing band Big Star. Now this is the musical mix rock musicians from Lennon to Weezer have claimed to aspire to: sunny tunes and dark lyrics. Big Star were great, and released four albums to complete critical and commercial indifference. Now of course they are hip as hell. The amount of people who claim to have always liked them... well, if I was Chilton I might ask why none bought the stuff first time round.

This release comes from one-off live date featuring Big Star originals Chilton and drummer Jody Stephens augmented by Jonathan Auer and Ken Stringfellow of The Poses. Being a more-or-less best of collection, and a tight performance from a band which comes alive live, you can't really go

Tougher Than Tough

The Story of Jamaican Music

Box Tops, Steady Boppers, Dub, Dance Hall Reggae

4 CD collection containing 95 songs covering 35 years of Jamaican hits from Ska through Rock Steady to Reggae and Ragga

Includes 64 page book

'Reggae remains not only the bush telegraph of Jamaica but an unstoppable rhythm that keeps the world listening for the next beat and the next phrase'
Q, November 1993

wrong. Chilton is in fine voice, his 70s excesses having left no visible marks, though these days he appears a rather raddled cherub, and the politically correct may be saddened by the choice of Todd Rundgren's "S-L-U-T" as a closer. For anyone who likes that 60s English Beat Revolution Filtered Through The Byrds With Lots Of Harmonies And Descending Chords type of thing, this is irresistible. Chuck away your Martin Stephenson records and listen to the opening chords of "September Gurls"; you'll never look back.

JOHN RENNIE

Harrison Birtwistle

The Triumph Of Time/Gawain's Journey

COLLINS CLASSICS 13872 CD

Edgar Varèse

Works Vol 1 (1920-1927)

ERATO 4509-52137 CD

In contrast to Western composition's dominant trend towards development and resolution, here are two composers for whom music is primarily a matter of conflict. Each divides the orchestra into battalions, which then vie with each other for supremacy. From time to time one battalion — usually percussion — will gain the higher ground, only to be dragged back into the thick swirl that is the body of the orchestra.

The two Birtwistle pieces, composed two decades apart (1972, 1992), share that feeling of infinitesimal movement breaking through a surface that is never quite still. Birtwistle's music has a refined sense of the dramatic, although that isn't necessarily to say that it is always theatrical. *Gawain's Journey* is a kind of condensed, purely orchestral version of Birtwistle's opera *Gawain And The Green Knight*. When that opera was premiered at Covent Garden in 1991, it seemed to me to lack precisely the element of theatricality (the opera will receive what few operas ever get, a revival, in 1994, and it would be nice to have to revise that opinion). These performances, by the Philharmonia Orchestra under Elgar Howarth, are meticulously crafted, perhaps lacking a small degree of savagery

but persuasive nevertheless.

In his note to the Birtwistle issue, Andrew Clements cites Varèse as a prime influence on the British composer. That has often been Varèse's fate: to be cited as an influence, rarely to be performed in his own right. This release, presumably the herald of a more or less complete survey, moves to change that. The first and last works here (*Amériques*, *Arcaïca*) are massive structures — the latter is scored for an orchestra of 120 players — that stretch the concert hall to the limit. On CD the impact diminishes, but they are still exhilarating: the first perspective of *Amériques* opens on to a world not far removed from Stravinsky's *The Rite Of Spring*, and finishes, as the title suggests, viewing a world that, in 1921, suggested a myriad new possibilities. Those possibilities are still not exhausted. Kent Nagano conducts L'Orchestre National de France in a significant and rewarding anthology of music that retains the element of surprise.

NICK KIMBERLEY

B-Shops For The Poor

Plague The Inventor

NO HWAVE NW 43 CD

The Ex & Tom Cora

And The Weathermen Shrug Their Shoulders

REDUC 55/EX 0570 CD

Plague The Inventor, the third album by B-Shops For The Poor, may never ever establish the group as the Henry Cow of their generation. B-Shops are one of the very few British groups a generation on from Henry Cow (and Art Bears) to have kept faith with experimental rock, while many of their peers (Conspiracy, Hession/Wilkinson/Fell, etc.) moved into free jazz and improvised music. Of course, B-Shops' music is also laced with these elements, but there's a pounding rhythmic quality in the use of drum machines, an unleashed menace in John Dobie's superb guitarwork, which come from rock.

Plague sees a return to song-based pieces (by Dave Petts) which figured more prominently on *The Iceberg Principle* (1989) than the freer *Visions & Blueprints*

(1992) with Peter Brötzmann. Two songs, however, extrapolate into improvisations. Louise Petts's vocals are less dramatic and jazz-influenced than Sarra Tyrer's and this conscious understatement causes a few pieces to sound vocally samey. The mix is formidable and much darker than previous outings. To the forefront three, sometimes four, saxes harmonising with geometric precision, deep down, electronic percussion sequences and John Edwards's robust double bass playing, with the aforementioned guitarist hacking through this dense undergrowth. Clearly, B-Shops are one of the strongest forces currently experimenting with rock.

The Ex's second collaboration with American virtuoso Improv cellist Tom Cora also echoes those important late 70s European experiments which coalesced around the Rock In Opposition movement. Not that the Dutch group have jettisoned their punk ideals. "Oh Puckers Now" spits out the rant quota with alliterative venom. There are also surprising excursions into Turkish and Okinawan traditional song, and a brilliant tribute (I think) to Florence Nightingale. What died-in-the-hair punks will make of these developments is their problem; experimental rockers will welcome *And The Weathermen* — with open minds.

CHRIS BLACKFORD

Carcass

Heartwork

BARACHE MH097 CD/CPLP

No longer content to wallow in the Grindcore swamp, Carcass have cleaned up their act. *Heartwork* has the feel and appearance of a brand-new killing machine, its internal combustion engine chrome-plated and polished daily. It occasionally makes for a frustrating listen, especially when these former band leaders of Death Metal slip up and degenerate into the metal ordinaré of Iron Maiden. But — bag but — for half of this album, the music has an absolute, radical novelty that places Carcass light years beyond anyone else working within the almost infinite, mathematical

possibilities of the rock quartet. What Slayer's *Reign In Blood* was to Thrash, Carcass's last album, *Necrotism*, was to Death Metal — utterly definitive, generically unsurpassable. *Heartwork* shares more than a little in common with Slayer's next, *South Of Heaven*, in that it represents simultaneous steps back, forwards, and towards the mainstream.

But it's the flashes of relentless futurism that interest us here. "No Love Lost" revolves around a solid rhythmic anchor, like mid-period Black Flag thrashed up and ground down, while "Doctrinal Explicatives" has the kind of set velocity formerly associated with spaceships or the most relentless 'Ardcore Techno, their frenetic tone-manipulation of the most baroque keys available is possessed of the same intensity as electronic or electroacoustic music. Indeed, *Heartwork* confirms what is by now obvious, that Death Metal and 'Ardcore Techno have been running on parallel lines for some time now, if only rarely (eg Joey Beltram's sampling of the awesome Pantera's) crossing wires. Carcass may well be too puritan to follow through this new opening themselves, but more so than the thrashier misnomers of the likes of Senses, this is surely an essential jumping-off point for anyone else willing to try.

JAKUBOWSKI

George Clinton

Family Style: Testing Positive 4 The Funk

ESSENTIAL ESS 198 CD/CPLP

Roy Ayers

Get On Up Get On Down

POLYDOR 519 918 CD/CPLP

In a career as broad and prolific as George Clinton's, bringing order to his chaotic — and often undiscovered — output is always going to be tricky. Well, that's one justification for this admittedly mess of an album.

The schizoid shifts of style here would be OK if the tracks themselves weren't so weak, and so often have little to do with Clinton, and nothing at all to do with P-Funk. It's tragic stuff, a horribly neutered — FM-friendly —

parody of the revolutionary sound that George was, and still is, capable of producing, even the *Brides Of Funkenstein* are represented by three way-below-par cuts. When we descend into the soft rock of Nick Savannah & Dwarf (who they?), things are getting desperate.

It's no surprise that the best cut here sees George going back to his doo wop roots, with a touching version of "Love Up", the record's only breath of authenticity. From the cheesy cover art to the sub-literate liner notes, this package screams "cheap." The man deserves better.

While Clinton was busy inventing P-Funk, Roy Ayers was establishing himself as the mentor of the jazz funk scene. For a sound that has been so maligned, not least because of the grotesque British stuff that is still being released, it's refreshing to go back to the source. What you find is that Ayers's notion of jazz funk — as opposed to the elevator music that the genre has so often generated — was usually heavy on the funk, always heavy on the soul. Cuts like "Turn Me Loose" and "Get On Up Get On Down" demonstrate his acute dancefloor sensibilities, while the mellower tracks avoid the horribly bloodless sound found in so much of the genre. Still too many solos, but a useful antidote to the cobblers usually served up in the name of jazz funk.

DAVID LUBICH

Robert Cray

Shame And A Sin
MERCURY 518 517 CD/MC/LP

Albert Collins

Collins Mix (The Best Of)
PONTBLANK 72438 39097 CD/MC/LP

Big Daddy Kinsey

I Am The Blues
VERVE 519 175 CD/MC/LP

Coincidentally, both the openers on Cray's and Collins's albums are moans about tax. This is traditional fodder for blues musicians and, given the number fleeced by the business over the years, is generally considered more acceptable than, say, Eric Clapton whining about the difficulties of making ends meet.

Collins: through Conifer

No Wave, Rec Dec: through These, ReR, Impetus

Erache: through Revolver/APT

Leo: through Impetus, Cadillac, New Note

Like a lot of things about Cray, though, it doesn't quite ring true. After all, this man's honeyed brand of urban blues and liquid virtuosity around a Fender guitar have taken him to stadium rock superstar. Still, can't buck tradition.

Shame And A Sin is touted as a move from the R&B feel of recent albums and back to a grittier blues feel. Maybe I'm missing something, because anything here could comfortably slot into any of Cray's previous seven albums. The taut twelve bar blues, organ, Memphis-y horns and rich vocals suggest polished up Stax. Robert Cray fans, who include just about every leading blues guitarist, will love it.

Let's be fair, Albert Collins did have money troubles. From obscurity to long overdue commercial reward, this collection (which sees Albert versioning selections from his back catalogue) displays his marriage of lyrical misery to musical exuberance. Generally the tracks alternate between the shuffling, funky blues of "The Moon is Full", and the 90 miles an hour, rock 'n' roll attack of "Honey Hush". He does occasionally slow it down: "Tired Man" gives full rein to his abrasive, yearning vocals and piercing, razor-sharp guitar work — here Collins becomes the salt to Cray's sugar. Hard to think of a good reason not to buy this album.

Kinsey is an altogether gentler proposition. This tribute to Muddy Waters also includes versions of "Nine Below Zero", "Little Red Rooster" and "Got My Mojo Working", and the paterfamilias of the eclectic and energetic Kinsey Report sticks to faithful readings of these Delta and Chicago blues classics. Given the expert assistance of Jimmy Rogers, Pinetop Perkins, Buddy Guy and Lucky Peterson they are pretty seamless readings too. Kinsey has a pleasant baritone but the whole thing seems a bit restrained, "Marrish Boy" lacking the Waters menace. When it gets to spoken, two minute peans to the late Mr Waters, my ears glaze over. Why not pay your own tribute to Muddy by buying the real thing.

JOHN RENNIE

Marilyn Crispell

Santuano
LEO CDLR 191 CD

Cecil Taylor

Live At Bologna
LEO CDLR 100 CD

With Mark Feldman's violin and Hank Roberts's cello added to her piano Marilyn Crispell has one of the classic chamber music instrumentations here, to which are added, with varying degrees of relevance, Gerry Hemingway's drums. Recorded in New York last May, this is a programme of nine diverse yet related pieces. Outwardly the most straightforward is "Repercussions Of Light", a long violin solo with only simple, distant percussion support. "Water" is a brief cello solo, the tone vocalised in strong contrast with the purity of Feldman's playing, while "Entrances Of Light" is a striving piece which piano and violin dominate.

In "Air/Fire" each instrument goes very much its own way at first, but violin and piano take charge as agitation increases and the music reaches its climax, which is chiefly an affair between keyboard and drums. "Burning Air/Wood" starts as a pizzicato duo for strings to which fugitive piano and percussion comments are added; this is an interestingly elusive piece, its violence suppressed. Several minutes of percussion begin the eponymous "Santuano", then, after a pause, the other three enter, taking the music in quite another direction, the piano at first pacing rather stolidly but the violin as passionate as ever.

Violin and piano are the common denominator here: Crispell and Taylor occasionally, yet the latter consists of a single performance recorded in 1987 and lasting 70 minutes. How is form given to a stretch of music that long? The first half hour or so is like a continuously unfolding tapestry in which the main line of continuity is provided by Taylor's furiously active piano Leroy Jenkins, whose violin is never favoured by the recording balance, and Carlos Ward (reeds) repeatedly emerge with varying degrees of prominence, then fade, but Taylor's work is more interesting than anything the others do.



On the proverbial melodic, harmonic and rhythmic levels his improvisation is in a constant state of development, the basic musical material being subject to non-stop transformation and remaining so for around 30 minutes. Then the performance breaks off and there are diverse inarticulate shouts, cries. Was there a brief static spectacle here? The disc is not accompanied by notes that might have explained. After several minutes of this Thurman Barker moves from drums to mamba, Ward takes up his flute, and the music assumes a totally different character. But Taylor resumes at the piano and gradually the proceedings gather pace again

MAX HARRISON

Leo Cuypers

Zeeland Suite/Johnny Rep Suite
BVHAAS CD 9307 CD

This landed on the mat the same day as Django Bates's *Summer Fruits*, and it seems to me to reflect a similar set of virtues and unvirtues. The ideas are thrown around like confetti, with a jocular prodigality that might just be thought to backfire from time to time. The only thing that was ever "adolescent" about Cuypers's music — or that of Loose Tubes — was the apparent desire to keep sentimentality at bay. Gavin Bryars once said to me that the British (but let's say Anglo-Saxon races in general) were far more frightened of sentimentality than they were of complexity or "difficulty".

There's a great tide of emotion waiting just offstage here that threatens to swamp the music, but it's held in check by clever structural engineering and Cuypers's dogged, little boy's fingers at the keyboard. Unlike fellow Dutchman Willem Breuker, who performs on both suites, Cuypers is more than prepared to show an emotional hand, much less disposed to absurd mood swinging, and there's a breezy, affirmative quality to the music. The *Zeeland Suite* was released on LP in 1977, and was the result of a government commission for the province. Breuker, trombonist Willem Van Manen, and bassists Arjen Gorter and the late Harry



Miller are strongly featured (the latter pair on "Two Bass Shit"). There are sideways looks at Bach, Joplin, Onnetti, blues and calypso but without the cartoon spikiness of the Breuker Kollektief.

Recorded earlier, in 1974, the *Johnny Rep Suite* has the swerving grace and sheer elegance of the dedicatee. Apart from Cruyff himself, Rep was the most distinguished exponent of Dutch "total football", and you can see — or rather hear — how much Cuypers liked the idea. Though there's plenty of solo space here, too, including a blinding run and cross from Breuker playing his alto and tenor simultaneously, it's essentially ensemble music, with the kind of esprit that made the Dutch so beguiling to watch. There's also just a touch of the soft-centredness that at the same time made them so frustrating to support, but that's neither here nor there. The original release, entitled *Lye In Shoffy*, is (I think) the first ever BVHAAS LP. An appropriate moment, perhaps, for a rethink of the Dutch contribution to new music.

BRIAN PIDGOTT

Dub Syndicate

Echomania

ON-U SOUND CD24/MC64/LP64

African Head Charge

In Pursuit of Shashamane Land

ON-U SOUND CD25/MC65/LP65

The delight that greeted the news that On-U was not, after all, shutting up shop this year, must be tempered by reservations about the "never mind the quality, feel the wotch" approach the label seems to be taking. Unfair, perhaps, given the integrity and anti-commercialism for which Adrian Sherwood has become famous, but too much of its product (and that is, after all, what it is) consists of studio experimentation and half-formed ideas.

This is where the Dub Syndicate stall. It's not that *Echomania* is a bad album: certainly, the weirdness is refreshingly high, and it's always good to hear the likes of Akabu and U-Roy (though not Lee Perry, who is rapidly becoming the Old Git

of reggae). "Roots Commandment" is a satisfying drum and bass workout, and "Echomania" shows that Sherwood is still in a league of his own in exploring the echo chamber. But the end result is Dub By Numbers. Why did they bother?

African Head Charge are something else. Following on from their underrated *Songs Of Praise*, this is their strongest set yet. Far simpler and less tricky than Dub Syndicate, they substitute spirituality for overproduction, musically for trickery.

Built around a committed roots sound, from the rock solid rhythms and tribal chants, to the yearning vocals, this is a genuinely moving album. Tracks — notably the wonderful "Learning" and "One Love" — grow and evolve organically, developing a lush and complex sound. But what really marks this album out, and makes the near-opaque "Heading To Glory" so outstanding, is the sense of mystery, of otherworldliness. This is dub as it should be.

DAVID LUBICH

Morton Feldman

For Philip Guston

NAT ART 4-61041/2 & 4-61043/4
CD5

Morton Feldman

For Christian Wolff

NAT ART 3-61201/2 & 4-61203/4
CD5

Various Artists

The New York School

NAT ART 6101 CD

Ways into the sometimes daunting terrain that is Morton Feldman: a beautifully abstracted musical essence which seems to hang suspended in the listening air.

Feldman (influenced greatly by 50s non-representational painting, thus the first dedication here, to his longtime New York painter friend, Guston) tried to loose himself from conventional methods of composition, and lose himself in formally abstracted methods of serial decomposition of arranging notes and counterpoints and resonances in a pure musical stream of their own. It is a plain, simple, craftsmanlike Utopianism which is distinctly American, for all

Byhaast: through Impetus

On-U Sound: through Southern

Nat Art: through Harmonia Mundi

Sentrax: through Pinnacle/TRM

Pathological: through Trident/Pinnacle

its Cage-iness

It's like he's hit upon the alchemist's note: a non-addictive musical narcotic which places you between absolute clarity (spatial, harmonic definition) and absolute loss (of consciousness). These long (4' 25" and 3' 22" respectively) any, gently dissonant sound fragments, with no privileged order, build up into a work which is more properly called sublime than merely beautiful: the realm of hypnosis, gnosis, aporia — "a precarious state close to sleep..." (Of course, it is in sleep — the most vacated human state of all — that dreams occur.)

Anyone with any interest in the ideas and forms of musical repetition should own at least one of Feldman's modern devotional works. And if you want to place Feldman inside musico-logical history, it would be hard to better *The New York School*: a kind of sampler of the genres and masters of minimalism: Earle Brown, John Cage, Feldman, and Christian Wolff, a selection of pieces recorded (with one exception) in that essential shadow-decade, the 50s.

All three releases feature the working partnership of Eberhard Blum (flute, piccolo) and Nils Vigeland (piano, celesta), joined by Frances-Marie Utti (viola, cello) on *The New York School*. Praise from an oak such as myself seems almost superfluous for work of this calibre (as is usual with hat ART, all aspects of the package are exemplary). It's a lifetime's work: the kind of concentration normally reserved for cabalistic study.

It poses — without uttering a word — questions like: Can we find any sense in a tone? What is a whole tone? Why do we want (to make) tonal whorls anyway? It's composition turned into a procedural somnambulism, the insistent babble (of form, structure, significance) stifled, distilled down to a vocabulary of motionless clauses, pauses, durations, intervals. An art of overtones. A piece of an endless precipice. Making (music) next to no — or Noh — sense is what these recordings are all about.

IAN PENFAN

God

Consumed
SENTINEL SETS CD

Ice

Under The Skin
PATHOLOGICAL PATH 05 CD

God is a powerful collaboration of sharp musicians drawn from a mixture of rock and jazz backgrounds marshalled to fuel Kevin Martin's chthonic train to where? Oblivion? Catharsis? Purgatory? Bliss? In God, the subtle magic of acoustic improvised music is sacrificed to raw power, a sort of Peter Brottmann meets Joujouka in hell. This is the dark underbelly of contemporary music and some would rather steer clear.

Consumed, God's second live document, was recorded at the Swiss Taktlos Festival in 1992 and largely features new material. Once the structure has been firmly established, the songs pretty much take on their own momentum, careering into chaos and fragmentation. The four tracks last 67 minutes and perhaps lack the focus of the group's studio album *Possession* (Venture). Nevertheless it's one unholy mother of a jam which demands to be played loud for its full physical, stomach-churning impact. The twin drummer rhythmic backbone deserves a special mention: the digressions and cross-rhythms are purposeful and clearly stated. John Cage saw rock and jazz as sustaining undesirable lifestyles: discuss.

Ice is a slimmed down version of God playing with estranged dub. *Under The Skin* moves in some interesting directions and in some ways is an update of Kevin and Justin Broadrick's 1991 *Techno-Animal* sampling project. Ice uses live musicians and sampled loops moving in hypnotic, circular rhythms, often emphasising the physical resonance of the bass by pushing it right to the foreground. Much of this is "fresh territory" (to steal a phrase) but there are hints of Meat Beat Manifesto (on "Skyscraper"), Can (on "The Swimmer") and elements of God's dark menace underpin the proceedings. No cobwebs in this chill-out room.

PHIL ENGLAND

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Marcia Griffiths

Put A Little Love In Your Heart
TROJAN TRL325 CD

Tommy McCook And The Saxonics

Down On Bond Street
TROJAN TRL326 CD

Trojan have done well by Marcia Griffiths; this is an excellent-sounding collection and all the hits (1969-74) are here, including the famous "Young, Gifted And Black" from 1971. Production (orchestral overdubs in London on Jamaican backing tracks) gets smoother over the years, working towards standard pop soul. A shame the rhythmic push in the earlier numbers (surely that's Ernest Ranglin on "Don't Let Me Down") is ideal for close-contact dancing. Griffiths is one of the few female singers in reggae. Her association — as an L-Three — with Bob Marley assured her international reputation. She's a tough cookie (none of the little girl minnows that make Lovers tracks so desperately erotic), though the lyrics are for the most part sub-Broadway stop. Her delivery is very formal, almost Patsy Cline-esque, lacking the idiosyncrasies that make Big Youth or Althea & Donna so disarming.

Down On Bond Street is a collection of reggae instrumental produced by Duke Reid between 1966 and 1968, featuring Tommy McCook (tenor and flute), Lester Sterling (alto) and Don Drummond (trombone) among others; rhythms are provided by Clifton Jackie (bass) and Hugh Malcolm (drums). "Our Man Fian" and "Mad Mad Mad" are highlights, but every track has the weird combination of mellow dreaminess and lurching enthusiasm that distinguishes Jamaican musicianship. In the digitalized, shrink-wrapped world of modern music such off-kilter knobbliness is inspirational. It's like patting a marshmallow with a twiglet, peculiarly satisfying.

BEN WATSON

Jam Nation

Way Down Below Buffalo Hill
REAL WORLD CDRW36 CD

Nicky Skopelitis

Elstias
AXOM 514518 CD

Malika Spigel

Rosh Balata
SWIN WH1 CD

Jam Nation is the most unlikely product to have emerged from last year's Real World Recording Week (held in the rural seclusion of Peter Gabe's Wiltshire HQ). It's a global how-down under the aegis of dance mixers Mark Rutherford and John Gosling. Entering the fray blind, armed only with a stack of rudimentary ideas and rhythm tracks, they roped in anyone who happened to be passing — Daniel Lanois, Jah Wobble, Galiano, Billy Cobham, Lucky Dube, Chinese harpist Zi Lan Zhao, members of Farafina, et al. You'd expect rambling disorder, but the result is a startlingly good eclectic dance album. It has a degree of coherence-decay built in, but it's thoroughly persuasive, never straying into the bogus exoticism that this sort of project runs the risk of. Amid the more long-grinding funk are a couple of more wafly atmospheric forays, but the surprises are in the casting and repertoire — an implausible slinky version of the folk staple "She Moved Through The Fair", Jane Siberry in unlikely House mode, Daniel Lanois chomping on a bit of roadhouse raunch to African balafon accompaniment.

The more orderly confines of Axom's orchestrated "collison" projects might be expected to make for something more focused, but Nicky Skopelitis's latest jamboree is a tiresome haul. As a guitarist whose tastes range from squawking feedback torment to dobro atmospherics, Skopelitis provides no real focus for the assembled team — ex-Meter Joseph Modeliste, a typically recognisable Jah Wobble, Jake Lieberzeit, Today Musa Soso, Simon Shaheen, whose violin is the most distinctive voice here, and Amna Claudine Myers, splashing the Hammond all over with scant discretion. It's all pomp, no circumstance, and we've heard it from Axom before.

A slighter but more engaging

crossover of voices is Israel's Malika Spigel with British arch-scowler Colin Newman, he of Wire. They've collaborated on the music, not as memorably as on some of Newman's solo ventures, but the result's an amiably bouncy Euro-pop (the dateline's Brussels, of course), spiked up by Spigel's slightly fey delivery of Hebrew lyrics. It's sort of old-fashioned, shades of Telex even, but oh, what a superb fish on the cover.

JONATHAN ROMEY

David Jean-Baptiste

Groove On A Four
SAXOLOGY SAX001 CD

Nathan West's sleeve-note compares young London reads player Baptiste to Coltrane for soul and seriousness, but choice of instruments — alto saxophone and clarinets — means he actually sounds more like Eric Dolphy. A hard act to follow you miss both the razor-edge intensity of timbre and the startling compositions.

Still, this is a nice-sounding album of acoustic jazz, warm and funky. Kevin Hayes — who did so much to inject rhythmic spike into Steve Williamson's early groups — is an asset, skillfully locking his Afro-conscious percussion into Cheryl Alleyne's drums and Mario Castronari's bass. Baptiste's gruff, unflashy playing sits comfortably in such a matrix. Andrea Vicari's piano is a great relief from the Oscar Peterson-style flippiness too many fluent pianists are prone to, her chords are solid and funky.

Alongside the architectonics of Giant Steps and the maelstrom of Sun Shu, Coltrane was also about luxuriance and relaxation — qualities Groove On A Four provides in abundance. Soft hard bop for unwinding to — and why not?

BEN WATSON

JJ Johnson

Let's Hang Out
EMARC 514 454 CD

Randy Weston/Melba Liston

Volcano Blues
VERVE 519269 CD

Perhaps he's spent too long composing for films and TV, but JJ Johnson's compositions and

arrangements on Let's Hang Out bring a new meaning to slick and functional. They seem to inspire a level of emotional detachment that even Ralph Moore and Jimmy Heath, who alternate on tenor, and Terence Blanchard on trumpet, sound hard pressed to overcome. Even Johnson's much-touted trombone remains earthbound, leaving Rufus Reid on bass and Victor Lewis on drums to bring what little cheer there is on offer to this rather uninspired session.

In contrast, Melba Liston's arrangements for Randy Weston's ensemble are a delight. Full of snister, shifting tone colours, they deal with the underlying theme of the blues. Johnny Copeland, Texas blues singer, is on hand for two vocals, one of which is a brilliant recasting of Basie's classic "Harvard Blues". Wallace Roney, still in thrall to Miles after their Montreux collaboration, takes an elegant, poised solo on "Sad Beauty Blues", one of the album's highlights. Few releases today contain the ingredients to mark them as contemporary classics but Volcano Blues, with its strong soloists, including Rodney, Benny Powell, Teddy Edwards, Hammett Bluiett and Talib Kibwe, profound ensemble writing and rhythmic poise, all guided by Weston's all-encompassing world vision, mark this as an album that will still be around 50 years from now.

STUART NICHOLSON

Freedy Johnston

Can You Fly
ELEKTRA 7559 61587 C/MC/TP

Freedy Johnston — a Kansas boy born in a town equidistant from both New York and San Francisco — is being hailed as the voice of smalltown America. Smalltown means (at least in terms of this, Johnston's second album) that a sense of distance and dislocation provides the pervading mood.

In itself, this is as old as the hills. Today's singer-songwriter is replacing the cowboy in modern American mythology, and the lonesome frontiers are all songs. What marks *Can You Fly* out from the rest of the herd is its maker's demeanour. Johnston's voice is a cutting, straggling thing and his

arrangements—the usual guitars and drums with a swathe of cello and accordion thrown in at intervals—are lean, with a punchy production provided by Knut Bohn and Joe Jackson's old bassist, Graham Maby. No heroic sweeps accompany the 13 songs which, tersely, as if muttered against the blast of chill wind, explore varying types of loss.

It's possible to hear Steely Dan, Neil Young or Springsteen (having shed his bombastic underpinning) shadowing Johnston, even if these are only distant echoes, which really have very little to do with majestic howling-at-the-moon tunes like "Responsible," "Tearing Down This Place" or "Trying To Tell You I Don't Know."

There's a line in that last one that slips by—"Trying to sing what I can't say"—which encapsulates every struggling message that ever entered a song. Unquestionably, these are big thoughts from a small town.

LOUISE GRAY

Sheila Jordan & Harvey Swartz
Songs From Within
PLA HD144 CD

Recorded live in 1989, *Songs From Within* finds vocalist Jordan and bassist Swartz on superb form. Despite some anxieties about the effect on the bass of the venue's environmental drawbacks (unstable temperature and humidity causing problems with the tuning), Swartz surpasses himself, and this release continues the tradition of awesome telepathic collaborations between these two exceptional musicians.

The tracks consist of Jordan's classic mix of jazz and popular standards, sometimes dovetailing the jazz number with its source material, as when she segues "I Got Rhythm" into its bop paraphrase "Anthropology." No matter how often you've heard roadwork items like "Good Morning Heartache," "In A Sentimental Mood" and "You Don't Know What Love Is," she and Swartz polish them up like new. There's also a new reading of Tadd Dameron's "If You Could See Me Now" which she first cut for Blue Note in 1962 with Barry Galbraith, Steve Swallow and Denzil Best.

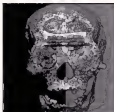
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Saxology: 7 Ames House, Duke Of York St, London SW1Y 6LA

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Comparison of the two recordings demonstrates the perfection of her art then and her continued dedication to its development and integrity now.

This is musical interaction and debate of the highest order. Like a conversation between old friends, the performances run through secret jokes and allusions, the testing of shared values, affectionate teasing and sentimental reminiscences.

BARRY WITHERDEN

Juno Reactor

Transmissions

NOVA PLUTE NOVUM 24 CD/2LP

Various Artists

Version 1.1 — A Compilation

NOVA PLUTE NOVUM 17 CD/2LP

Given the infinity of the universe, I'm not sure whether Ambient's new breed of space explorers should be congratulated or ridiculed for locating and following exactly the same trajectories that German cosmic couriers of the 70s such as Tangerine Dream drew across the night sky. Juno Reactor aren't the first group to let their cosmic rock roots show through the ambient yawp of their space electronics, but at least they stretch their sampled envelopes to the point where they snap back and catapult them farther out there. In their case the whooshing synth noises are integrated into something far more interesting: a thoroughgoing investigation of the thrill of speed. Where others, including The Orb, have reached stasis through dub, Juno Reactor accelerate the ambient pace by setting off sequenced rhythms in pursuit of the long arcs of electronic melody which they etch into vast expanses of emptiness.

The album's "High Energy Protons" also figures on Nova Plute's first birthday compilation, which consolidates the label's reputation for crosswiring pioneering electronics, dance and Techno from Europe and America. Version 1.1 pulls off the impressive trick of showcasing the label's diversity while hanging together as a coherent collection. Some of it, like the heavenly furniture shifting of Vanqueur's "Lyot", is already a

little over familiar, but elsewhere, the tracks throw tantalising clues as to the future directions of Ambient, Techno, etc. Scubadevils' "Celestial Symphony" and Unity 3's "The Age Of Love Suite" eroticise Ambient in the way Moroder and Summer's "I Feel Love" did with 70s disco, and Plastikman's snaredrum-workout "Sozialc" is a most intriguing fusion of Techno-militancy and minimalism.

RIBA KOPF

Kim Kashkashian

Lachrymae

ECM 439611 CD

After her splendid recording of Hindemith's violin sonatas for ECM, Kim Kashkashian goes on to his *Traummusik*. This was composed in the small hours of 21 January 1936, immediately after the death of King George V, and was broadcast over the BBC in a memorial concert the following day. Hindemith of course playing the solo viola. Its four movements are terse, variously grieving, and all convey a sombre beauty.

A single finely structured movement of about 25 minutes, Penderecki's *Concerto For Viola And Chamber Orchestra* is another lamenting work, with the solo instrument, as Hans-Klaus Jungheinrich suggests in his excellent accompanying notes, standing for subjective individualism. Though less extreme than in Penderecki's earlier pieces, the dark-toned orchestral writing of this 1983 score is constantly inventive, not least in its use of percussion. It ranges from delicacy to vehemence, being fully matched at both extremes by the solo viola. Each composition receives a superlative performance by Kim Kashkashian and the Stuttgart Chamber Orchestra under Dennis Russell Davies, and the recording is up to the highest ECM standard.

It is typical of record industry vagaries that these two passionate names sandwich a dead duck, namely Britten's *Lachrymae*. Or so it appears to me. Britten's propagandists have rammed his music down our throats for decades (a classical equivalent to the case of Coltrane, almost to that of Stan Tracey), yet it still leaves

me cold. *Lachrymae* is a series of reflections on a song by John Dowland, another composer of music with a high expressive charge, yet Britten's ideas seem to me just another example of his technical virtuosity and emotional nullity. To repeat a phrase our editor always did like, "I can only shrug my shoulders and walk away."

MAX HARRISON

Melvins

Houdini

ATLANTIC 7567 82532 CD/MP3

Melvins are the walking corpses of Grunge. Marching straight out of the archives of the 70s, they seem oblivious to anything that happened after 1984 or thereabouts. Yet, like Black Flag, the damage they do to their source materials (references include, they say, Gang Of Four, Robin Trower, Kiss, Lynyrd Skynyrd, ZZ Top, Rush and worse) results in a music not of loving archaism, but of perverse originality. Like Swans, one set of cues comes from the lesser-known, slowed-down side of The Stooges, and being the purest of white trash, Melvins' sound summons images of Iggy Pop's macaroni cheese and trailer park background. Sinuous, tortured vocal melodies wrap themselves around two-note basslines and a slow motion apocalypse of drumming, occasionally, Melvins reach such a critical mass they can do without guitars completely.

It is entirely fitting that a band like Melvins should end up on a major label like Atlantic (beyond the obvious connotations of Led Zeppelin back catalogues). The success of the 70s hard rock mainstream only served to prove that what is culturally central and populist, consumed by those outside of the narrowly defined middle class, is also so beyond the pale as to inevitably and eventually end up back at the extreme margins, in a kind of warped double-loop. Melvins don't so much celebrate the greaser arena rock experience so central to the American teen male's rite of passage as simply perpetuate it, run with it, evolve it. That they do so with so little irony and so much humour only confirms the entirely



Leo: through Impetus, Cadillac, New Note

FMP: through Impetus, Cadillac

New Music: through Harmonia Mundi

Boy's Own, Warp: through Pinacote/RTM

Extraplatte: Box2, A-1094 Vienna, Austria

synthetic honesty of their project.

JAKUBOWSKI

Phil Minton & Roger Turner

Dada da

LED RECORDS LR 192 CD

No sleeve notes, no typography (not even on the disc's entry in the Leo catalogue on the insert), no referential titles in other words, no words. Or hardly any — Phil Minton occasionally loses the place and falls into a brief, fragmented rant.

No studio tinkery either, just ten tracks of Minton and Turner, old hands at this improvisation business, working their way through a series of abstract soundscapes, ranging in duration from 35 seconds to just over 13 minutes, and given titles like "ah ha", "la la", "la dee da" — well, you get the picture.

Phil roars, screams, whispers, grunts, groans, rasps, hiccups, coughs, spits, sniffs, snorts, vomits, and generally turns his vocal chords inside out in pursuit of a guttural, visceral, non-verbal vocabulary. Roger complements this with a frigree of percussive sound, counterpointing Phil's extraordinary vocal contortions with his own free-wheeling battery of effects.

They have been doing similar things for years, however, and for these ears at least, they have reached something of an impasse, and one which faces all avant-garde art at some point, which is the question of where to go once the shock of the new has worn off, other than repeat once radical effects *ad infinitum*. I don't hear the answer, but anyone who admires their art will want this disc anyway, if only for familiar pleasures.

KENNY MATHIESON

Morphine

Cure For Pain

RYKO DISC RCD 10262 CD

Morphine's debut album *Good* (released only five months ago in the UK) was true to its title, but on *Cure For Pain*, the Boston trio have really hit their stride. Everything about it — material, playing, production — comes with an extra injection of confidence and intent. Morphine, have (half jokingly)

referred to themselves as "implied grunge" and "low rock". These terms are as pertinent as any, and especially the latter, as the group's sound is pitched around Mark Sandman's deep rock croon and two-string slide bass and Dana Colley's baritone sax.

The relationship between the players in Morphine is similar to a jazz trio (or, more accurately, mid-70s UK jazz/R&B trio Back Door) where the addition of another element would upset the balance. They rock with a real swagger, producing funky hybrids like "Buena", where Sandman plays with a sound so thick and chunky you feel you could bite into it. Colley's not, melodic sax lines snake around the vocals on "I'm Free Now", swooping down to throaty foghorn blasts. Sandman sounds remarkably cool here, even when delivering his end-of-a-relationship nightmare blues "I've got guilt, I've got fear, I got regret/I'm a panic stricken waste, I'm such a jerk." He's got a way with a narrative, though syncopated drums and lascivious sax accompany his story of a dangerous liaison on the rocking "Thursday", which is part cautionary tale, part intoxication with lust and fear.

DAVE MORRISON

Max Nagl

Wumm! Zack! Vol One

EXTRAPLATTE EX181 CD

Bauer/Nozati/Van Hove

Organo Piano

FMP 60 CD

Max Nagl's compositions for twin saxophones, drums and video projector were commissioned for the 1992 Heimschquer Festival in Salzburg. "Greatly inspired by the artistry of Lol Coxhill", the music is a blend of Caribbean melody and Alpine Lederhosen. Nagl lacks the weird wobble Coxhill has culled from Jamaican saxophone without that poignant slant, banal instrumentals are just that. It's mercifully short (a mere 19 minutes), though the "volume one" in the title is ominous. Nagl has been involved with better projects before, and his cover-art is always distinctive.

Organo Pleno is an exhausting 70 minutes of trombone (Johannes Bauer), piano and accordion (Fred Van Hove) and improvised vocal (Annick Nozati), recorded at the Workshop Free Music in Berlin in July 1992. This isn't quite as good a vehicle for Johannes Bauer as his state-of-the-art trio with Roger Turner and Alan Silva, but his trombone still sounds vital. Nozati is brilliant — funny and guttural, utterly unfey. Van Hove is persistently inventive. This might not be a particularly user-friendly CD — too long, too relentless, too samey — but the trio are shockingly powerful, the musicians apply their considerable knowledge with unerring focus. Big, shiny, classical recorded sound — grand piano and all — is (for once) a plus.

BEN WATSON

Bern Nix

Alarms And Excursions

NEW WORLD RECORDS 80437 CD

Born in Toledo, Ohio, guitarist Bern Nix was first inspired by the twang of Duane Eddy and the blues of Freddie King. Seeing Les Paul on television led him towards jazz. In 1975 he joined Ornette Coleman's Prime Time. His is one of the twin guitars — clear and ringing next to Charlie Eiberbee's fuzz and distortion — to be heard on the epochal *Dancing In Your Head*. In the early 80s he helped foment the No Wave punk jazz explosion in New York, playing with James Chance and Elliott Sharp.

This is a trio recording, with the unbeatable Fred Hopkins on bass and Newman Baker on drums. For all the horror with which Ornette's harmolodics is regarded by both record companies and music professors, Nix is a pretty player. His sins against conventional harmony (the earnestness with which such liberties are defended in the sleeve notes indicates the degree of conservatism in current jazz) give an open-ended, spacey feel that is never less than engaging.

Unfortunately, Nix is not a forceful composer. You miss the poignant melodies that provided him with a springboard in Prime Time. For a taste of how beguiling free jazz can be, though (a form so often

damned as an impossible racket), *Alarms And Excursions* is a useful disc.

BEN WATSON

One Dove

Morning Dove White

BOY'S OWN B28 352 CD/CPC/LP

Sabres Of Paradise

Sabresonic

WARP 16 CD/CPC/LP

When One Dove released their first single "Fallen" two years ago, listeners rushed from dancefloors to dictionaries to look up new words to describe the Scottish trio's work. Dorothy Allison's vocals were languid, sinuous, a kitten in a sex trance. But it was Boy's Own DJ/producer/remixer Andy Weatherall who turned both "Fallen" and the subsequent "White Love" into zero gravity dreams that echoed across dubbed-out space.

The same magic is present in abundance on One Dove's debut album. *Guitars whirr*, *Alarms* sighs. Titled like a new shade of Crown emulsion, *Morning Dove White* also says something about the atmospheres, the light, that the band and Weatherall understand so well. Although MDW is a tad sparse — of 11 tracks, there are three versions of "White Love", two of "Breakdown", one heard-it-before "Fallen" — a concentrated richness compensates. The tracks' constituent colours are faintly audible. "Why Don't You Take Me" is Eurythmics-esque, "Sirens" is King Tubby on Kraftwerk's *Trans-Europe Express*. Brian Wilson's Pet Sounds and Phil Spector provide the hints.

Meanwhile Weatherall — that essential piece of Dove's whole — has released his own debut album *Sabresonic* — seven instrumentals — fuses the architecture of dub (think *Wesley*, *Mad Professor*, *Tubby*) with sombre electronics (Bowling Low, John Carpenter soundtracks, and more) and a sensibility that takes the best elements from Acid House.

This is a very different provenance to Weatherall's other stop-off points. The urgency of "And Electro" or "Still Fighting" comes from something more visceral than a beat-maniaculated

rush. When it only takes a single track — in this instance, "Smoke Belch" — to cut a swathe through the tired self-referencing that constitutes most dancefloor

records, you have a revolution on hand. *Sabresonic* is an album for which the usual superlatives are redundant. It is a stunning debut, breathtaking in its audacity and a new standards of excellence for the foreseeable future.

LOUISE GRAY

Penguin Cafe Orchestra

Union Cafe

ZMP 518 410 CD/CPC

It could be said that the Penguin Cafe Orchestra are at the cutting edge of the New Muzak. Their music combines an easy listening, user-friendly facility with the relative cred of 'serious' composition and classical instruments. What they do with that combination is engaging enough to many ears, and in some cases seriously addictive.

Not mine. What they play is at root a kind of minimalism shorn of its rhythmic impetus and harmonic energy, and overlaid with alternately jumpy or syrupy melodies (although some are just dull) which echo folk, ethnic and classical forms. That combination has possibilities, but for the most part they succeed only in fratting them away in meandering fashion.

The only seriously engaged piece of playing I can hear on this disc is Kathryn Tickell's Northumbrian pipes on "Organum", and even that is restrained by her standards. "Cage Dead", a piece built on the musical letters of those words, could have been interesting, but instead ticks away to no great effect.

I suspect a lot of the people who buy this album will use it primarily as background music, and it is hard to argue against that notion when the foreground has so little to offer.

KENNY MATHESON

Pet Shop Boys

Very

PARLOPHONE CDPCSO 143 CD/CPC/LP

The CD is packaged in a plastic orange case. The case is embossed with raised dots. Partial design

credit goes to Daniel Weil, creative force behind the late 70s functional fashion item *Radio In A Bag* (on display at the V&A). How very Pet Shop Boys.

The Boys are Abba gone Techno, where kitsch weeds synthesizers and gives birth to social commentary, with everyone (usually) dressed impeccably all the while. The polite phrasings and subdued manner of lead singer Neil Tennant, the silliness and electronic rowdiness of clubber Chris Lowe. The hybrid that the two produce gets introspectively and pure physicality a-strirri!

This time the Boys are in love with love itself, its maturation, its death, its mere existence. The mood is bright, the tone orange and sunny, and pre-Nintendo computer games exchange phaser fire over every track. Exaggerated blasts go off, speed balls of sound fly by and Tennant dreams about having tea with the Queen. "There are no more lovers left alive/No one has survived," he commiserates with Her Majesty, listening to her lament about her familial difficulties as "lady D" and "the other one" look on. Elsewhere, he runs about naked to celebrate the rite of spring, but wants you to know that he "normally doesn't do this sort of thing". The English psyche naked down dead.

Each PSB song is a microcosm, pregnant with an array of possible meanings. The Boys' version of the Village People's "Go West" serves as an example. Critical opinion believes the song to be a paean for the gay community, a response to the rising incidence of AIDS, the less speculative view is that as a

JOHNNY CLEGG & SAVUKA

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hankering for opportunity, clubbers just dance to it. Yet it is a cover of a crap song written by the authors of "YMCA" that the Boys have packed full of crying seagulls, cheery harms, and a male chorus that gustily responds to Tennant's narrations. The beauty and the joke is that people like me analyze it. We assign a meaning to it — gay/straight, male/female, personal/communal, past/present, or no meaning at all — and each reading fits. The references are ambiguous enough to accommodate all versions, to satisfy all mindsets.

Such plurality does not occur at the expense of a credible musical backing. Quite the contrary: this album pounds with a pulse, soars, turns several lyrical somersaults then presents itself — hermetic, lush and not even perspiring. Universally, along with substance, is the key to the Pet Shop Boys' charming success.

JULIE TARASKA

Liz Phair

Exile in Guyville

MAJOR BLVD 051 CD/PC/CLP

PJ Harvey

4 Track Demo

ISLAND IN 170 CD/PC/CLP

Liz Phair has been hailed as the US Polly Harvey but is in fact the female Jack Kerouac, careening on a sonic roadtrip through the insides of scorched and broken lives. Backed by a dirty, Stones-based take on the blues (just note the title) and copping some of Jagger's sexual swagger, she exudes intelligence, confidence, horniness. *"I'm a cunt in spring/You can rent me by the hour,"* she swears in "Dance Of The Seven Veils," with a savoring timbre in her voice. On "Fuck And Run," the politics of a one night stand lie prone in the skeletal arrangement and stuttering drums reverberate of a guitar fed through a 60s amp — a scraped from the gut feeling.

When Phair lurches, delivering wistful ballads that lie limp, Polly Harvey is there to take over. *4 Track Demo* — which features bare-boned versions of nine of the tracks that appear on *Relief Of Me* —

was to be included in a limited edition package with *Relief Of Me*. The length of the material would have necessitated an increase in shop price, so now *4 Track* is offered on its own at budget price.

Free from *Relief's* overwrought and elongated Steve Albini production, *4 Track* establishes Polly Harvey's lyrics as the group's (deserved) focus. The title track, with its furious single string solo, throbs and reverberates until it explodes in your face. *"I'll be your legs/Keep you/Against my chest/You're not nd of me,"* she decrees. Are her banshee howls roared in orgasmic ecstasy or unendurable suffering? "Driving" — one of the record's five previously unavailable tracks — finds her pushed to that unnerving calm beyond hysteria, muttering *"Imagine your whole self is filled with light."* Polly Harvey embodies the sound of chopped insides, rubbed raw until they bleed.

JULIE TARASKA

Elvis Presley

From Nashville To Memphis: The Essential 60s Masters Vol 1

BMG 74321 15430 SCD/PC/CLP

"Essential" in this case, as so often, means "just everything we could bloody find, alright?" The scale of this compilation — 130 songs — is daunting, to say the least, but that "Volume One" is not as scary as it seems at first. These are all of what are intriguingly labelled the "secular masters." Subsequent collections will detail the King's gospel exploits and the afterlife, be very afraid! the film soundtracks.

Co-producers Roger Semon and Ernst Mikael Jorgenson wish to point up "a fundamental division" in Presley's output during this period. Here we have "the serious side of his career... what Elvis was really trying to do as a recording artist in the 60s, free from the demands of the movies and the concerts." Colonel Tom Parker, of course, made no such nice distinctions, and talk of "the serious redefining himself in a fast-changing musical decade" seems like an inappropriate attempt to impose a retroactive Madonna-ish gloss on a performer who had little if any control over his own destiny. The pages of the nostalgically LP-sized booklet which

accompanies these five CDs have a similarly inappropriate, smelly plastic coating. But the scholarly liner notes (taken from Peter Guralnick's forthcoming biography) reinforce the view that to gloss over the extent to which Elvis was cash cow first and interpretative genius second during this period is to do him a disservice.

It was the amount of featureless mush Elvis was obliged to record that gave such poignancy to his delight in the occasional tasty morsel. And the exuberance that he brings to even the most mediocre of material here is little short of heroic. The story starts with his first session in civvies. The pressure was most definitely on (Guralnick recounts a dream Elvis had in which he returned to Graceland and there were no fans there to meet him), the Colonel having deliberately kept the cupboard bare of new material while Elvis was away on army duty to strengthen his bargaining position with the record company on the King's return. Elvis, as always, delivers. "It's Now Or Never" can never escape the shadow of the cornetto, but "Fever" still burns, and "Mass Of The Blues", a vigorous collaboration with new songwriting foils Doc Pomus and Mort Shuman, pointed to one of many hopeful avenues for the future.

Even while these were being systematically closed off, Elvis made "Are You Lonesome Tonight?", "His Latest Flame" and "You're The Devil In Disguise" (the lesser known "Finders Keepers Losers Weepers" and "Just Let Her Jim Said Hello" aren't bad either). There was to be no escape in auterism: "You'll Be Gone", a grim clipity clip type number with castanets and a big finish, was the first and last song Elvis would ever write, and you don't have to be a Dylan lover to find the honeyed quaver he brings to Bob's "Tomorrow Is A Long Time" — "I can't hear the echo of my footsteps, I can't remember the sound of my own name" — especially poignant. If one of these discs needs to be essential, it would have to be the fourth one. Elvis's 1969 Memphis sessions are a revelation now, so it's hard to imagine what it must

have felt like to hear them at the time. Maybe everyone was too busy smoking their tonenots to notice. Earlier attempts to break free of Pat Boone-style instrumentation have often sounded forlorn, but here suddenly everything comes right. On "Long Black Limousine" even the trumpets sound moved by the intensity of it all. The great landmarks of this time are "In The Ghetto" and "Suspicious Minds", but blue plaque-worthy moments abound.

After all this excitement, the rantes and alternate takes with which the collection ends are a gentle letdown. There are "Witchcraft", a duet with Frank Sinatra from the 1960 Timex TV Special, and a muffled and strangely De La Soul-ish alternate take of "Suspicious Minds" to get your teeth into, but at the end of approximately four and a half hours of Elvis you would have to be a very sad person to want to listen to an undubbed version of "I'm Yours". Better to thumb through the booklet to the singles sleeve memorial page and marvel at how many important people Elvis looked like on his record covers: James Dean, Marlon Brando, Tania Tikaram, Lloyd Cole, James Cagney and Jack Lord from *Hawai 5-0* — they're all here. Can anyone still say they only like Elvis before he joined the Salvation Army?

BEN THOMPSON

Prince

The Hits & B-Sides

WEA 9362 45443 3CD

Prince

Hits

WEA 9362 45440 CD

Prince

Hits 2

WEA 9362 45435 CD

We can all complain about what favourite tracks a *Best Of* compilation might be missing but here the complaint is what it fails to encompass in the first place. At a time when the likes of Bob Marley and Bob Dylan have been granted multiple CD compilations as career summaries, complete with alternate takes, live performances, bootlegs, etc., Prince, a performer

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The Oyster Band
Holy Bandits



Weddings, Parties, Anything
Difficult Loves



**Tito Puente, Celia Cruz,
Eddie Palmieri, etc**
Gran Gran Fiesta



**Alex Chilton, June Tabor,
Michelle Shocked, etc**
Catalogue 93 Volume 2

The Wire — every month further into music

whose workload is perfect for such a collection, is feted only with this third collection of 'hits' and their B-sides. But Prince has always been more than the sum of his hits OK, among the hits is some of the best popular music this century, but with the Revolution long over, the Lovesey band here largely unrepresented and the New Power Generation apparently unplugged it is not enough to palm us off with an ill-conceived and cynical marketing product such as this: if you've got the albums you'll have most of the tracks (there's not so much as an extended version among them) and if you want a cohesive collection of B-sides you'll have to fork out for the full three CD set.

The Hits, in the way of such things, are not all 'hits' and the 'hits' are not all here. But more to the point, what's also not here are the well-known unreleased tracks (a whole bunch of which are available on bootlegs), the evidence of Prince the live performer, or the intimate post-agg jammer, or the producer of other artists, from Alexander O'Neal to Flyte Time. There are no instrumentals and no collaborations, with the likes of Miles Davis, for instance (again available on bootlegs, but only if you know where to look). If Prince (or whatever he's calling himself today) really is quitting music, then the uninspired nature of these compilations (which include sleeve notes from longtime collaborator saxophonist Alan Leeds, and photos by Herb Ritts — but isn't that the photo session he reputedly walked out of?) means Prince leaves recording with a whimper not a bang.

Memo to Warner Bros. release that apparently recorded trio album soon, or a live one, or an alternative takes one, or

ANDREW POTNERY

The Raincoats

The Raincoats
ROUGH TRADE R3021 CD

This totally welcome ressee comes complete with sleeve notes from long term fan Kurt Cobain. Listening to The Raincoats made me feel like "a stowaway in an attic... we're together in the same



old house and I have to be completely still or they will hear me srying from above, and if I get caught everything will be ruined." Obviously The Raincoats have no more need of big name male approval now than they did first time round, but Cobain's love for them is emblematic of their enormous impact on born-too-late punks of both sexes.

A sudden rash of celebrity endorsements — from The Voodoo Queens and Huggy Bear on this side of the Atlantic to both Kurt and Courtney Love (Hole recently covered "The Veld" for a John Peel session) on the other — means not just that The Raincoats are this year's Big Star, but that the seeds they planted are finally bearing fruit. How will this record fare now it's not just clutched to elite bosoms but out in the marketplace again with the Elton John resses? Very well would be my guess, since the scraping strings and drummer's clunk cut to the bone as quick as ever, and the intervening years have thrown up few sounds as thrilling as the way these voices argue the toss with destiny.

The three songs from the fabulous "Fairytale in The Supermarket" EP are here in short playing rather than LP form. I don't know if this is a good thing or not because of my shame. I only ever heard the single before now. What is not in doubt is that The Raincoats' version of "The Kinks' "Lola" is one of the top three cover versions of all time, and the martial cajon of "No Side To Fall In", the subversive TA advert soundtrack of "Off Duty Trip" and the close harmony parody of "No Looking" are just as vital. Reseses of the next two albums, *Odyshape* and *Moving*, follow in the New Year — how did The Raincoats get from here to Camden back garden Afro jazzers? BEN THOMPSON

Rough Trade, 4AD: through Pinnacle

Dorado: through Revolver

This Way Up: through SRD

Kitchenware: through Revolver/APT

CEC: CP 845, Succursale Place d'Armes, Montreal, Quebec, Canada H2Y 3J3

Red House Painters
Red House Painters
4AD CAD 3016 CRYCLP

How telling that this, the third Red House Painters album, is again titled *Red House Painters*. Recorded during the same session that yielded last June's double album

(see *The Wire* 112), these eight songs further desert the emotional isolation of lead singer Mark Kozielek. A sense of space is repeatedly cultivated: resonant guitars, echoing vocals and elongated lyrical enunciations create airy layers and minute delays, the music seems to arrive as if from across some chasm, in waves, slightly fuzzy.

The Painters develop a new allegory for this distance: America. By its sheer girth America guarantees separation, and it is used by the band as both a metaphor for, and the actual cause of, estrangement. Where it's a straight three day drive from coast to coast, friends, lovers and any sense of community are easily lost in the expanse. It's the abandoned young mother in "New Jersey" (same song, new filled-out version), straining to traverse the physical and mental distance, pleading "Don't leave me out here too long! Will you bring me out there, too?" Then it's the "bubble of pain" which Kozielek can't reach out from — again cut off by an invisible barrier.

Continuing to examine the experience of living in America, the Painters include renditions of two culturally loaded anthems — Simon & Garfunkel's "I Am A Rock" and "The Star Spangled Banner." Simon & Garfunkel function as the American Boaties: their songs reflect the country's psyche and unify its people. Kozielek chooses an S&G dirge and then infuses it with an uncharacteristically affirmative timbre: his voice, emphasizing "I" soars above the emotional retrenchment that is the song, tinging the piece with hope. "The Star Spangled Banner" cuts a similar reaction. Penned by imprisoned patriot Francis Scott Key, the song celebrates the persevering fidelity of Americans. Kozielek wrings the song as if to release its drops of hope, to call to account the hymn's stalwart promise that yes, "our flag was still there."

Overwrought irony or a true attempt to become part of a community? It's unclear, yet it's safe to say the Painters will continue to delineate the geography of emotional isolation. You might not lack the distance, but

do meet them halfway
JULIE TARASKA

Geoff Smith
Gas Food Lodging
KITCHENWARE NWCD 27 CD

The press release tells us that Smith writes uniquely postminimalist music. Unique music? A big claim, and an inaccurate one, but Smith doesn't need the hyperbole.

Postminimalism is, presumably, the fusion of minimalism and the 'new' tonal compositions of James MacMillan and the like, with some trappings borrowed from rock. The four Smith compositions included here — "Like Me, Want Me, Pay Me" for multitracked piano, "No Purchase Necessary" for string quartet, "Fifteen Wild Decembers" for voice and keyboards, and "A Good Swiss Watch An' A Woman From Anywhere" for string quartet and voice (the Balanescu Quartet and Nicola Walker Smith) — contain plenty of echoes of a whole list of forebears, including Lost Jockey and classic Terry Riley.

These works present the merest pinches of melodic material, which are re-wrought from piece to piece like a set of variations, rescored, given a different aspect by the slightest adjustments. Along with most of their ilk they tread a tightrope between mesmericism and tedium, and which side they fall will depend on taste and mood of the moment. I'd grant them hypnotic fascination. None of the tracks is less than pleasant. "Like Me" is vigorous and exciting. "Decembers" is ravishing and worth getting the disc for, despite the miserly overall playing time of 34 minutes.

BARRY WITHERDEN

Michael Smith
The Whole Thing
ACID JAZZ JAZZ BB CD/PCLP

UFO
UFO
TALKIN' LOUD 518166 CD/PCLP

Incognito
Positivity
TALKIN' LOUD 518 260 CD/PCLP

Various Artists
Dorado: A Compilation (2)
DORADO DORO 16 CDLP

These four albums are as much products of their issuing labels as the artists who made them.

Dorado, Acid Jazz and Talkin' Loud all put out modern funk but they approach their shared genre from different angles. These are records conforming strictly to house style.

Acid Jazz are the most ubiquitous and established of the three, popular and hip. They recently celebrated their fifth birthday and they have left confident enough to expand and diversify (they have just set up a sub-label catering to rockier sounds and have moved to new, larger premises). Saxophonist Michael Smith comes over as a sub-division of Acid Jazz, his music is related to what they produce but he's not part of the label's mainstream. An established session player, he is currently musical director for Jamroque, but his own work lacks the energy and drive of the ambitious young man he works for. Almost entirely instrumental, *The Whole Thing* is a musician's album, technically correct but low on imagination. After a few plays it reveals a warmth and a depth, but the straight jazz tracks sound clumsy and dated.

Talkin' Loud's remit is more diverse, more soulful and worldly than Acid Jazz's. UFO fit firmly into the latter category. The group's principal members are Japanese and they employ an outrageously wide variety of musical styles to paste together mesmeric musical collages. The most experimental of all the groups here, they utilise dub, funk, flamenco, folk, jazz, HipHop and the spoken word and are a menace to anyone keen on pigeon-holing. Challenging and engaging, melancholy and occasionally humorous, UFO's quest for originality sometimes leads them into obscurity — their only fault.

Incognito, one of Talkin' Loud's most successful bands, are a different proposition. Positivity is their third album and it carries the burden of expectations raised by previous glories, particularly the group's popularity. Stateside

Because of this it suffers. Song lengths are truncated and a preponderance of bland, inoffensive arrangements and upbeat lyrical platitudes creates the suspicion that this is an album created to reap the lucrative sales of the American market. However, it's not a bad record by any means. Their jazzy Brit-soul sometimes hits home sweetly, enveloping the listener in its fluid grooves and warm messages.

Dorado can reasonably claim to be the most pioneering of these three labels. Their latest compilation demonstrates their willingness to take a chance on oblique jazz funk and displays the label's preference for music that merges the delicacy of jazz with the brevity of rap beats. Their output as a label is a hit and miss affair and this compilation reflects that. The pluses, though, far outweigh the minuses and as a guide to new talent and styles in 90s club-orientated jazz one could do a lot worse than look here. American poetess Dana Bryant, an inspired signing who has since been snapped up by a major label, contributes two engrossing curios, as does Matt Cooper, a very talented, very young keyboard player from North London who appears under the guise of Outside. Also featuring the label's marquis act D Note, and a track by seminal New York producer Arthur Baker, this collection falls somewhere between an indulgence and a necessity for anyone with an interest in modern music.

JAKE BARNES

Tindersticks
Tindersticks
THIS WAY UP 518 306 CD/PCLP

Just because there are millions of novels out there in the world doesn't mean they shouldn't be read, neither does it mean — necessarily — that no one should write another. Don't be fooled by nomenclature here. *Tindersticks* are a white indie band brandishing guitars and museum-piece keyboards, but unlike most of the pack (encapsulated by the similarly-named Posh Sticks bands with too many heroes to be themselves), you never get the

feeling that they only got together out of a desire to play out their own poplite fantasies. And Nick Cave, they also remind you how little it matters whether performance is a pose or 'for real' as long as it looks shattering. Their sound is the urbane beat of an intelligent, artistic but (and therefore?) unemployable twentysomething subculture aspiring to epics the size of Scott Walker or Lee Hazlewood on a shoestring budget. The songs are laments for love and innocence just-lost but still believed in. "City Sickness" could be their theme song, a starchy edge lurched through sodden, hostile streets and a host of twinkling vibes. There's an exotically Spanish texture to "Her" and "Paco De Renaldo's Dream", pianos glimmering through a Vox tremolo, muted trumpet and maracas seething behind a multi-voiced surrealist tale of seven seas sleepwalking. "The Not Knowing" closes the record with a delightfully *argentine* arrangement for woodwind trio. But it's on cuts like "Jsm", a swinging feast of Plominone chesewere organ, and "Randrops" ("What we got here is a tired love/What we got here is a lazy love/It moomies around the house and can't wait to go out/What it needs it just grabs and never asks"), that *Tindersticks* amply fulfil the promise of their name, the deceptively fragile agents of destructive fire.

ROB YOUNG

Various Artists
Discontact Vols 1&2
CEC DISCONTACT 6.2/6.3 CD

Something significant is going on in Canadian electroacoustics. Composers are taking things seriously and being taken seriously. An abundance of activity is becoming apparent.

The Canadian Electroacoustic Community (CEC) is the official voice of this group, performing a similar networking and information function to the London Musicians' Collective. These two CDs — comprising 40 pieces of CEC members' current work over a span of two and a half hours — bears witness to the health, diversity and general buzziness of

this community — and what's more they're free.

The works here make use of found, processed and synthesised sound, in ways that emphasise the composers' delight in timbral worlds and the movement of sounds in space rather than any theatrical/narrative function.

Escapism could be one criticism levelled at these evocative dream worlds ("I get the feeling I'm not effecting political change right now," says Dan Lander in a piece that documents his first experience of virtual reality — one of the few works whose concerns lie beyond sound *per se*). But obviously the same community has been responsible for making "sound ecology" a buzzword in the local media and raising an awareness, in the words of R Murray Shafer, of the "dangers of unchecked noise as well as the beauty of neglected sounds around us and our imaginations." These people take the heightened-appreciation-of-our-audio-reality business very seriously.

Of course, clichés do emerge, and one of the documentary type pieces which conclude both of the CDs is actually a critique of the genre and the stylization that might be emerging in the CEC's idea of electroacoustics, perhaps much of it emanating from father figure Francis Dhomont, who taught a lot of the people here. Inevitably, there are copyists and there are innovators, but there is a huge variety of work here, pushing out in a variety of new directions.

Apart from, perhaps, the *Electrodes* collection — 25 three-minute works on the excellent DIGITALLES label — this is the best introduction to the current state of electroacoustic music around

PHIL ENGLAND

Various Artists

Howls, Raps & Roars
FANTASY 4PCD 4410 4CD

When, during the 1950s, the night-watching commentator Norman Podhoretz denounced the writers of the Beat Generation as "know-nothing Bohemians", he set the tone for much of the criticism that followed. Even now, the new generation of Beatophiles might

endorse something of the Podhoretz putdown, preferring to see their idols as some kind of holy fools, with the emphasis on "fools". And the British poetry establishment would probably prefer to call this collection of "recordings from the San Francisco poetry renaissance" something like *Pranksters, Poetasters & Phalstines*. But then the British poetry establishment always does give the impression of talking with a pickle up its arse.

Most of the performances collected on these four CDs were recorded in front of an audience, and the rapport between poet and listeners is almost palpable. In fact, given the nature of the two Mad Mammoth Monterey Poetry Readings (1959, 1963) that furnish some of the liveliest performances, poet and audience are symbiotic, a very vital Community of shared ambition. That ambition — naive, quixotic, foolish but absolutely fundamental — was to change the world through literature. It can't be done, of course, but these guys (here, it is all guys) gave it their best shot. If they didn't change the world, they at least shifted the basis of our understanding of it.

That doesn't mean they shared a common aesthetic. The visionary gross of Allen Ginsberg's "Howl", with its long-breathed lines leaving the poet near exhaustion, is far removed from the rather dated rhetorical flourish of Kenneth Reiner's "Thou Shalt Not Kill" (performed with a small jazz combo and it works). Nor do the deeply personal aphorisms of David Meizer make an exact fit with the sprawling, intoxicated mantras of Kirby Doyle, or the loopy logorrhoea of Philip Lamantia.

I'm sure it makes commercial sense to give one whole CD over to Lenny Bruce, but he doesn't really fit. It's not that he isn't funny — although I don't find him as amusing as he finds himself — but that his spiked delivery in some way works towards obliterating language. I'd rather have had the chance to hear Robert Duncan, Gary Snyder and some of the other San Francisco poets of the day who aren't included. Still, it's an exuberant, exhilarating set, full of

rare visions. Whether it be Michael McClure roaring with the lions in San Francisco Zoo, or Lew Welch, whose "Hermit Poems" reveal a true comic sense. As Ezra Pound suggested, poetry is news that stays news.

NICK KIMBERLEY

Various Artists

Unknown Public 03 PianoForte
UNKNOWN PUBLIC UP 03 CD/CYC

This third issue of the "creative music quarterly" is a "loud and soft, black and white issue" with lots of pianoforte (the instrument that is). I'm not sure where UP stands regarding the "anti-philosophy" of pluralism rubbish by Brian Morton in his article on BMG's new Catalyst label (*The Wire* 116). This issue certainly is pluralistic, even if, as they say, the only link with the traditional piano recital may be the modernist study by Julia Usher, *Morak I*.

I guess the claim is that postmodernism doesn't imply the abdication of judgment, so let's get the bad stuff out the way first. Michael Nyman's piece, from the soundtrack to Jane Campion's film *The Piano*, is consistent with the rest of his stubbornly unexpressive output. Music to have a lobotomy to, really (and during recuperation, a viewing of the latest Greenaway/Nyman film might be therapeutic). It hardly matters what Nyman thinks the music is about, but I did chuckle at his explanation of Ada's "sexual bargain" with her illiterate, tattooed neighbour.

This is quite a sexy issue in fact, with Aliguma's orgasmic groanings brought by conception and birth on *Devolution* (no piano on this, and it's not the birth of the Scottish Assembly she's concerned with either). Sail for those who like contributions to the idea of art, rather than art itself, I guess, the postmodern malaise. As much fun, but more pleasing to the ear are the bright, Cage-prepared-piano sounds of Benoit Delbecq's *Le Boteux*, while the beautiful understatement of Stephen Montague's *Hoku* is at the 'unprepared' piano end of the spectrum.

The "contemporary classic" which gets an airing at the end is Graham

Fitkin's *Louie*, performed by Piano Circus. Interesting, though probably not a classic. What I liked best, though, was the solo piano of Alex Maguire on *Terraines*, quicksilver stylistic transformations, the impermanence of improvisation. For all its inevitable imperfections and near-misses, *Unknown Public* offers a much-needed challenge to the standardised market for contemporary music.

ANDY HAMILTON

Various Artists

Tougher Than Tough: The Story Of Jamaican Music

ISLAND CDHM 813 4CD

Tougher Than Tough isn't a cash-in on reggae's recent pop-life resurrection, but a considered overview, put together by long-time archivist Steve Barrow, which is sussed but never transporter bland. It favours historical sense — one period per CD, from ska to 'sleaziness' — over punst mania, freed from the necessity of showcasing one label (this isn't simply an Island back pages exercise) or style or period, the rationale of TTT shows how apparent departures are always part of a music's greater continuity.

Jamaican music from rocksteady to ragga has always been simultaneously accessible and experimental, radical and conservative. Listening to this cyclical dance of three and a half decades, you hear how it has remained true to its duties as a popular music (dance, dramatisation of daily events, a substitute-drum soundscape), while tipping its brim to all manner of modes which begin with 'trans-' transmission, transgression, transformation. And transcendence.

'Trans' means across, and JA(H) music is all about bridges in the air. Between US and JA, between JA and the rest of the world. Like all islands, it suffers isolation as both a penance and a blessing. All island dwellers have their own peculiar antennae: they're always listening to things carried in on the breeze. This is one reason JA produces records like no one else. Open on all sides, it is a flux of moods, exported thoughts, imported drugs,

you name it: it all goes into the mix. You can hear it here: vibrant obscenity rubbing up against devotional inspiration. Not anchored to anywhere else, it pirates its own consciousness, produces doubles of itself. Reggae's currencies are social hope and daily chatter, nip off and reliability; the records simply magnify a streetlife chatter which is already extant.

If anything is missing it is the dubwise delirium of the 70s — Pablo, Perry, Gibbs, et al — here trammed down to brief moments of (7"45) production flourish (on Delroy Wilson's "Better Must Come", for instance, flange you could dip a finger into). This is a song-led set — with the weird right up alongside the poppier stuff — which makes more negotiable sense for the armistice purist. The one jarring note is the live "No Woman No Cry" — Old Grey Whistle Test reggae. OK, I'm being a purist bore, but although I can see why it was included, stylistically it sticks out like a fluorescent dreadlock: some earlier, tighter Marley would have made far better sense.

Listened anywhere at the moment, from the nip-it-up dementia of the Techno-ragga pirates to Andy Weatherall's watershed soundmappings, from the charts to underground ragga brimstone, and you hear the consequence(s) of this porous Jamaican aesthetic. Long before sampling, JA producers had a cat thief's rationale: Bits of hit records were lifted — playfully, randomly. Recording was conceived as an

abyssal opening, rather than an abysmal closure.

TTT provides a sure sense not how much reggae (supposedly) "all sounds the same", but how different all its many voices always have been, right up to the present day. Shabba's bark and Pincher's lit are about as similar as crack and chocolate milk. Even if you thought you didn't dig the mid-80s switch to digital and dancehall, the tracks on disc four make a convincing case for the diversity and inventiveness of that period's producers and DJs.

Make no mistake, if you do ignore that recent history, the present is only so much attitude salad. And if you have never heard Leroy Sibbles testify or a Lee Perry production, there is as much a gap in the music of your mind as there would be if Ray Charles or George Clinton were missing. What TTT lacks in surprises, it makes up for with clarity and discrimination. Old label purists like me may have a case for complaining that it simply duplicates a lot of what they already know or own, but as a community access exercise it couldn't be bettered.

IAN PENMAN

Bennie Wallace

The Old Songs
AUDIOQUEST AQ 1017 CD

David Murray
Brother To Brother
GAZELLE GG 4006 CD

Zane Massey
Brass Knuckles
DELMARK DD 464 CD



Bennie Wallace is far too good a player to be languishing in the penumbra of public awareness. Bennie Wallace Plays Monk (1981) featured a piano-less trio plus the great Jimmy Knepper on trombone — a magnificent album. Bennie has now moved to the West Coast, and the players he's picked up there — Bill Huntington on bass and Alvin Queen on drums — though not quite a match for Eddie Gomez and Dannie Richmond, provide admirable support on some 'Old Songs'. Silithery licks and asymmetric phrasing invite stylistic, if not tonal, comparisons with the next player.

Of course, you need a private income, or worse, to support a David Murray habit. Latest is a further duo album with Dave Burrell on piano, follow-up to *Daybreak* from 1989. I can't say Mr Burrell is my favourite pianist but Murray seems to like him, and maybe the very simplicity of his playing complements the saxophonist's harmonic complexity. Romanticism is the key in a set of compositions mostly by the pianist, plus Jelly Roll Morton's "New Orleans Blues".

In contrast to these tenor players, Zane Massey is in the second division. Son of Cal Massey, legendary trumpet player, composer and arranger, here he fronts a trio with Hideo Tanizaka on bass and Sadiq Shahid on drums. The saxophonist is a strong but not very distinctive player, and the rhythm section can't answer the challenge of a trio format in the way Bennie Wallace's do.

ANDY HAMILTON

Fantasy: through Pinnacle

Delmark: through Topic, Cargo

Gazelle: through Sonet

Unknown Public: Dept W,
Freeport (RG 2558), PO Box
354, Reading RG2 7BR

THE FUGS FIRST ALBUM

NEW RELEASES ADDITIONAL TRACKS FROM THE EARLY YEARS



COMED 129

"You couldn't tell which one was Fred and which was Brian because of all the shouting and screaming. We gave it our all. It was a very fun thing." Ed Busby to Vox

"Looking up the band's life between art and pop, protest and parody..." Record Collector

"The band have portrayed musical anarchy quite like the Fugs." NCD

"The Fugs' first album is rightly celebrated as a landmark of the 60s. It still sounds fresh and radical, a whole new world of excitement and discovery opening up." Vox

"The Fugs just beat the Velvet Underground for the mantle of first great underground band." NME

Both CDs include many extra tracks, remarkable photographs, memorable and evocative liner notes



COMED 128

Sonny Boy Williamson/Willie Love

Clowning With The World
TRUMPET ALCD 2700 CD

Jerry McCain/Tiny Kennedy/Clayton Love
Strange Kind Of Feelin'
TRUMPET ALCD 2701 CD

Big Joe Williams/Willie Love/Luther Huff
Delta Blues 1951
TRUMPET ALCD 2702 CD

Trumpet Records of Jackson, Mississippi, was a label with several claims to fame. It was run by a white woman, Lillian McMurry, was the first to record Elmore James and Sonny Boy Williamson II, paid royalties to its artists, and conducted some of its sessions using the State Furniture Store as a studio. During its four-year existence in the first half of the 50s, Trumpet waxed a veritable treasure trove of blues, much of which wasn't issued at the time. Three albums of rare and unreleased material saw the light on vinyl a couple of years ago and have now been reactivated on CD via Alligator.

In her search for hits, Mrs McMurry committed a representative selection of mid-century Southern blues to wax, hence the wide spectrum of styles on this trilogy of albums: the sly singing and consummately timed harp of Sonny Boy Williamson; the cascading boogie piano and good-time singing of Willie Love, the city blues holler of Tiny Kennedy; Jerry McCain's broad-toned country harmonica; Big Joe Williams's rumbustious vocal drive; Luther and Percy Huff's precise and archaic mandolin and guitar duets; Clayton Love's amiable juke-joint piano — in fact virtually every prevalent black Delta style of the time is on display here.

Williamson is far and away the most accomplished artist here, and his eight tracks brim with virtuosity, none more so than a prototype of the conspiratorial "Keep It To Yourself" which he would later record for Checker.

Willie Love's locally successful "Little Car Blues", with its sustained sexual metaphor, would be copied



(as late as 1964) almost word for word by Lowell Fulson (and its piano figure note for note by Maxwell Davis) as "Too Many Drivers", but the original is hard to bear. Even in 1951, Luther Huff's acoustic Delta blues were too outmoded for anyone to bother copying but his four tracks with brother Percy are adroitly-duetted pieces, with the autobiographical tale of "Rosa Lee" capturing that peculiar Mississippi melancholy.

These are just a few of the highlights in the two hours of music here. As there are but few lowlights, and as the sound quality is better than one has a right to expect from masters which have laid untouched for nearly 40 years, all three come recommended, with the magic of Sonny Boy giving *Clowning With The World* the edge.

NIKE ATHERTON

in brief club trax

Kodwo Eshun anatomises new HipHop, Garage, Swingbeat and Techno.

DJ Hype The Trooper (SUBURBAN BASE PROMO 12") More astonishing sounds from the hardcore zone. DJ Hype's pragmatic approach lets him short-circuit what should work in favour of what isn't supposed to. Hence a music in which a snatch of perverted ragga runs up against a twisted perversion of street soul, only to plummet into a valley of angelic harmony, before being ambushed by a horde of scratches, out brusing for a fight. They win, but not before being overcome by an abducted 19th century orchestral finale out for a walk on the wrong side of town. The remix is no less improbable: a bass teeter on the verge of toppling into an abyss. DJ Hype lets it just wait a while before drawing out the so-fi alternative future aspect of ragga by introducing a chant, updating the ragga techno experiments of two years back. A music not of trance, but of teleportation.

Masta Ace Incorporated
Slaughter House (ISLAND BRCD 602)

COMING UP Masta Ace's third LP is a concept album which provides yet more proof that most of the best films of the last decade have been vinyl based. "Walk Thru The Valley" sets the scene, a shadowed non-scene in which Masta Ace, as the narrator, stands outside of the scene he portrays, commenting on the gangster scenario as it plays itself out yet again. The formulaic nature of gangsta rap gets parodied brilliantly in a running joke throughout the album.

Souls Of Mischief 93 It Infinity (JIVE 73377 12") Debut single from the Souls Of Mischief crew out of the Hieroglyphics family in East Oakland. The four play a game of lyrical hyperdexterity, straling each other with stinging metaphors while the beats are fusion based and headnodding. There's a split in HipHop which means you're likely to hear Dr Dre, Onyx, Hit Squad and Soul Assassins Souls in a club, while Pharcyde, Casual and Khemellons all move into the bedroom. Not so much a hard/soft split as a different kind of complexity distinction: the first propulsive and kinetic, the second intoxicated by itself, demanding more than the dancefloor is willing to give up. For now.

Various Artists Jazz Not Jazz Vol 2 The Real Deal (NEW BREED WORLD SERIES WORLDSP CD) While the UK dance jazz scene continues to define itself through a sentimental reading of Donald Byrd, Roy Ayers, Gil Scott-Heron and Lonnie Liston Smith, this compilation from New York's New Breed label has no such nostalgia. The former names are still held to signify some kind of affirmative, communal struggle, but this music wipes out all those signifying elements of the cosmic, the astral, the grounded. Strangely enough, this only reasserts them at the level of flow, anonymity and mystery. Everything is kept brief and abrupt as if to get out of the way of the physical, mechanistic micropleasures being asserted here. This is jazz subsumed into the cut-up of Garage, collapsed into the swoon of Swingbeat, processed and made artificial. Everything here is recommended for its cyborg

Trumpet: through Topic

Sub Base, React: through SRD

New Breed: through Revolver/APT

African imports: Natari, 22 Maybridge Square, Goring-By-Sea, Sussex BN12 617; Sterns, 117 Whitfield Street, London W1

shuffle, for the way it picks up the "cold" in "Cold Sweat" and the "machine" in "Sex Machine"

Various Artists Prime Numbers Compilation (**PRIME 011 CD**) The subtitle, "A collection of advanced technological dance music" is a problem, as if dance music per se isn't either of these things, as if either term is inherently valuable. Here, the connotations of advancement and technology turn out to be pretty much the same: dance stuff that's been hegemonic for the last 18 months. Still, Sunshowers' "Face Bass" is strong, it has an immediately fresh, apprehensive openness, as does the minimal funkiness, the pitter-patter of microdelights, in Zodiac Tracks' "Planet Earth". The rest, though, is dance as its most consensual, smugly preaching, its titles promising something it no longer delivers

Various Artists Strictly Rhythm The Second Album (**IRACT 26 CD/CWLP**) Two years on from the pioneering ambient jazz house of Strictly Rhythm's first compilation LP, this follow-up showcases the New York label's vocal-directed offshoot. Butch Quick's "Under Pressure" suggests the distance traveled. Then, Strictly was all about a murmured and muted transcendence through quietness, now it's a more orthodox "strong" vocal which carries the day. Joey Washington's "Watching You" takes the barely controlled hysterics of that strength until it cracks into one long, desperate cry of "No!" DJ Pierre, aka Audio Clash, aka Phuture, has the last word with "Inside Out", a rumbling, cracked crevice of a sound into which is dropped all the fragile certainty of Strictly's new attitude.

outline africa

Richard Scott goes on safari with the latest West African releases

At last somebody's got it together to release a Sak Sidiba CD in the UK! Three discs for Siems, whose Wassoulou Pol (STCO 47) is

destined to become one of the most important African albums of 1993. Some tracks are drawn from *Walo Gnaoua Don* (Camara CK7 KBK 910), an import which featured among *The Wire's* top ten African releases last year. Both Sak's singing and the music have a darker, more pungent feel than contemporary Wassoulou singer Oumou Sangare's records, especially the completely acoustic tracks such as "Wassoulou Fol" and "Douga Oasari". Other tracks featuring the obligatory drum machine and keyboards emphasize more obviously the connections with rock and funk: innovation, pragmatism or cop-out, depending on your point of view, they are at least used quite subtly, even if it's not immediately apparent what they're supposed to be adding to the music. Sak's cassette *Noko Gnaoua* (BBK001) is another slice of bristling Wassoulou perfection, a looser, jammy feel to this one. Ojeneba Oake's arrangements are brilliantly detailed, comparable with Oumou Sangare's. Ojeneba's new album (**BIBEND020**), assisted by the excellent guitarist Boubacar Traore, is similar in style and quality to her previous work, there is no higher accolade.

Both of these are included in the usual wealth of destined-to-be-classic cassette imports available from Ntani. As is Daouda Sangare's *Flora* (Oubien OUIS), with its traditional hunter-style *kambele* n'goni (that harp thing Don Cherry plays) accompanied by spirited singing and highly virtuosic *falanga* serali-lute playing. Despite its sham hi-tech cover, Molibali Ketta's *Vol 3* (IK DID) is a heavy Bambara-roots collection. The traditional sources of the music of a singer like Nahawa Doumbia, for example, are clearly evident here, n'goni bass, balafon, percussion and voices wrap themselves around each other in pure, breathless, intoxicating Malian rhythms. Some of these basslines would not need out of place on a 7Ds Lee Perry dub plate either. Zani Diabate, leader of Mali's mighty Super Djata, has an (all too briefly) solo album, *Ni Zoni Moro* (Oubien OUC09), basically a lighter, brighter version of Super O with the leader's dancing-in-your-

head guitar and skipping Bambara grooves well to the fore. Mamadou Doumbia Alias Percey's *Keio Dougou* (CK 7047), from the singer with the rightly revered *Biton De Segou*, is one of the most accomplished recent Malian albums, a very subtle combination of keyboards and guitars with some heavy percussion. Again, this is rooted in Bambara music, but there are less familiar sounds and rhythms here as well, including a pronounced North African feel.

The funk bass on these albums, always intrinsic in Bambara music, raises a question: could funk be to 90s West African music what reggae was in the 60s and salsa in the 70s? That is, an imported form in which African musicians both recognise themselves and triumphantly transform it in their own image? Certainly many of the abrupt, snapping rhythms of Senegalese *mbalax* is leaning in that direction — I can't help finding traces of Steve Coleman's M-Base funk-experiments here too. Lioness-voiced Kina Lam's excellent *Sun Cosson* No 7 (Studio 2000) finds her exploring more traditional repertoire and instrumentation, but Noreyri (KSF 15) is a further distillation of the tight, cracking Wolof funk she pioneered (almost brutally) on albums such as *Goloss* (Studio 2000) and (more gently) on *Bato Assa Bary* (KSF 004). Ndeye Mbaye's *Naboum Doun* (Genie Music, no number) displays similar sensibilities, though the music that surrounds her beautifully piercing nasal voice is a little mellower — Lait Mbaye's remarkable bubbling *toma* (talking drum) performances are particularly memorable. Jaal Mbaye's *Saxor Gorn* (no label) does not escape the often detrimental Senegalese predilection for poxy keyboard sounds, but is fully redeemed by Jaal's amazing voice — stretched tense as wire — and a brilliant sabar percussion group, it includes at least two monstrous tracks in "Bakk Jigee" and "Njaboot Guy Jural". Ouzi Et Ses Branches' bag hit *Xadimo* (no label) will be old news to anyone who's travelled in Senegal or Gambia this year (like you, for instance, Richard?) — Ed! A much softer, subtler sound than

most, this is perfectly crafted pop music, very neatly arranged with an exquisite touch of melancholy that reflects the influence of great Senegalese vocalist Thieme Seck.

Seck's own *Pur Mbalax* (Balago 9110-1) is a tour de force re-examination of some of his greatest moments, impossibly complex racing percussion underpins the leader's utterly poignant (and impossibly slow) vocal. Seck is a master of this art now and this is his most complete statement to date. Percussionist Tom Mbye's *Rimbox* (SYL 63158) is another big Senegambian hit this year, a stomping fusion of *mbalax*, jazz and mainstream pop. Super Retro Rhythme (no number) on the other hand plays an older fashioned *mbalax* that lacks the snappy harshness and studio-cleanliness of the younger contemporary Dakar-based artists. Some wonderful guitar playing, though, plus the cover picture features a load of old blokes with a bass guitar and a cow.

Some very hot music coming out of Nigeria again lately. Recent releases include Adelewa Ayuba's curiously titled *Mr Johnson Play For Me* (Flametrete FLTRCD SD4), a brilliant juju-style recording whose pure percussion and call-and-response muezlin vocals achieve real buzzing euphoria. Ayuba's *Bumble* (Flametrete FLTRCD S18) is even stronger, with a more abandoned, improvisatory feel and stupid lyrics like, "We are happy people! H-A-P-P-Y P-E-O-P-L-E", sung with Islamic intonation. Sir Shina Peters plays supercharged Afro-juju. Experience (Flametrete FLTRCD S03) and the million selling *Shononzo* (Timbuktu TIMBDC S01) feature his heavy 22 piece band rocking at a much fiercer pace than the more dignified gait of old juju stylists like Sunny Ade or Ebenezer Obey. *Lo Sublime* (AMC 006) by Mali's Amory Komba breaks with tradition by incorporating Zaïrean musicians. Having defined the neo-juju style she has been stuck in a bit of a rut with it, so pan-African efforts such as this are not only refreshing, but also important indicators of directions in which African music, whose capacity for self-regeneration knows few bounds, is heading □

rare and fine

- 1 Steve Lacy**, Eric Dolphy, Harold Land, Ron Blake, John Stevens, Max Roach
- 12 Afro Jazz**, Laune Anderson, Chris McGregor, Phil Minton & Roger Turner
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- 19 Ornette Coleman**, Charlie Haden, Steve Lacy, Slim Galliard, Jazz Cartoons
- 20 Art Blakey**, Hank Mobley, Genevieve Trio, Bobby Watson, Wynton & Branford Marsalis
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- 23 Bill Laswell**, Loose Tubes, Celia Cruz, Astrid O'Day, Alan Bush, Anita Lindsay
- 24 Betty Carter**, Jimmy Smith, Paul Bley, Sidney Bechet, Maggie Nicols, Vienna Art Orchestra
- 30 Chico Freeman**, Alex von Schlippenbach, Eddie Harris
- 32 Django Bates**, Dewey Redman, Tony Oxley, Diamanda Galas, Weather Report
- 33 Sonny Rollins**, Dave Brubeck, The Beatts, John Russell
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letters

chase the voodoo down

Re: Kraldursanstalten's Voodoo Boogie ("Great Lost Recordings", The Wire 115).

Kraldursanstalten's drummer, Michael Maksymenko, later turned up as a member of Crazy Backwards Alphabet, a group that also included ex-Beefheart drummer John French (Drumbo) and Henry Kaiser. Their only record from 1986/87 (SST 1101) features such delights as a relatively stately version of Kraldursanstalten's "Diet Endia Raka?" and ZZ Top's "La Grange" sung by Maksymenko (in Swedish!). Maksymenko also played and sang (again mostly in Swedish) on Henry Kaiser's *Those Who Know History Are Doomed To Repeat It* (SST CD 198). What makes this particularly interesting is that all the tracks featuring him are Beefheart covers ("I Love You, Big Dummy", "Alice in Wonderland" and "Mirror Man").

Unlike Voodoo Boogie, these recordings are less a continuation of the Beefheart tradition than a

comment on it, more fascinating for their multiple references than for any barrier-breaking interplay.

Just thought you might be interested.

Kurt Nussbaum, Bern, Switzerland

how time flies

Great Records Where The Tempo Speeds Up Very Noticeably. I would like readers' contributions to this discography and will start the ball rolling with these two:

1. Cecil Taylor with Steve Lacy, Buell Neidinger and Dennis Charles playing Billy Strayhorn's "Johnny Come Lately" at Newport, 1957. Starts off at around 158 bpm and ends at about 219.

2. Eddie Palmieri with La Perfecta — "Café" Starts at a gorgeous grinding 86 bpm and gets to 104 by the coda. From the LP *Straight Ahead* (Sic).

Yours in acceleration,
Steve Beresford, London

pop on a soap box

I'm writing to ask a favour. I am presently compiling information in order to write a dissertation on new political music. The proposal is to

explore the relationship between popular music and oppositional politics in Britain over the last four decades, before focusing on contemporary politicised acts. These are likely to include manifesto-bashing bands such as Rage Against The Machine, Asian bands like Cornershop and a section on the Riot Grrrl movement. I would be very grateful to hear from anyone who has any information which may be of relevance. Any music press or academic articles, band interviews or contacts, flyers or recordings relating either to the contemporary scene or to previous movements such as Rock Against Racism or Red Wedge would be gratefully received. After drawing a blank at Channel Four itself, one specific request: I have for a copy of the appearances of Huggy Bear and L7 on *The Word*. Thanks very much for your help.

Come the glorious day I'll buy you all a drink!

Dave Randall, 14 Beauvale Road, Meadows, Nottingham NG2 2EX

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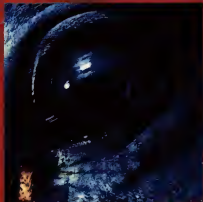
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